

\$4 at Newsstands and Bookstores

SocialistViewpoint

★ The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. —Karl Marx ★

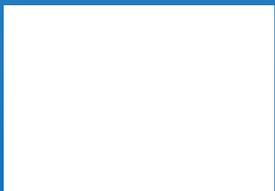
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2017 VOL. 17 NO. 6



California Burning, Puerto Rico Drowning - Page 4

Our Ever-Deadlier Police State - Page 8

Social Democracy or Revolutionary Socialism - Page 14



Dennis Banks ¡Presente!

April 12, 1937—October 29, 2017



Dennis Banks

Today, let my voice join in harmony, with the brothers and sisters of the American Indian Movement, to address our great loss of your father, grandfather, brother and friend, Dennis J. Banks. When I heard he was going to have heart surgery, I was praying for a speedy recovery. Three weeks prior to Dennis having surgery, I had a triple bypass open-heart surgery with good results, so I was shocked to hear he was having problems.

Let me share a few memories with you. I first started hearing about Dennis in the late '60s while being involved in the fishing and hunting struggle at Franks Landing in Washington State.

After returning to my home at the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Nation in North Dakota, I was aware of the occupation at Alcatraz in California. I also started hearing Dennis speaking out on TV and radio. I became involved in a struggle involving Native issues in Arizona and while there, I was invited to an annual AIM convention at Leech Lake, Minnesota. I met with Dennis and was impressed with the public

commitment he made on the Chunupa, to never use alcohol or drugs and to never refuse a call for help from Native people. I became a member the American Indian Movement and worked out the of AIM Chapter in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In my eyes, Dennis was a charismatic and powerful speaker and one of the most committed leaders in resisting the longest war in U.S. history against Native people of our Nations, not only for AIM but for all Native activist groups. He spoke of the genocidal practices of other countries being used against Indigenous peoples.

He was most known for being the last person to leave the 71-day shoot out called the Wounded Knee Occupation in 1972, where over 250 thousand rounds of ammunition were fired into Wounded Knee by the U.S. Government and the GOON squad. There is proof that none of the ammunition checked out of the federal armory were ever turned back. I believe the plan was to kill all women, children and men Warriors. Dennis continued to answer the call from Native people seeking help and he traveled wherever he was needed, even while being under multiple indictments because of Wounded Knee. If convicted of the charges, he was facing 150 years in a federal prison, along with another AIM leader, Russell Means.

We, as Native people, owe a huge debt to Dennis and other AIM leaders, for taking a strong stand to protect and preserve our Spiritual and cultural way of life. The direction of the American Indian Movement has always been from our Native Elders and Spiritual leaders. We were there to protect them as they passed on the knowledge and protocol of our Sacred Ways. We will forever be grateful to those Elders and

to the many members of the American Indian Movement who were willing to live and die for a way of life that has been our way of survival for Centuries.

Now my brother Dennis has joined our loved ones who have crossed over into the Spirit world and I know they gave him one hell of a welcome reception! They know his heart, and they know he was a true Warrior to the end.

In my most humble way, I ask that we never forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice to try to make a better world for the coming generations. Please, sing their songs with honor, in their memory, tell their stories with pride with every opportunity you have, and always, please remind our young people and each other, that every battle that was ever fought, every life that was ever taken, every ceremony being performed, is with our future generations in mind.

Please remember Dennis James Banks like I do, as being one of the greatest Warriors of our time. I am proud and humbled to call Dennis my brother.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,

Leonard Peltier

Write to:

Leonard Peltier #89637-132
USP Coleman I, U.S. Penitentiary
P.O. Box 1033
Coleman, FL 33521

Donations can be made on Leonard's behalf to the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 24, Hillsboro, OR 97123.

**FREE
LEONARD
PELTIER**

SocialistViewpoint

November/December 2017 Vol. 17, No. 6

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

www.socialistviewpoint.org

email: info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

CONTENTS

U.S. and World Politics

| | |
|--|----|
| California Burning, Puerto Rico Drowning | 4 |
| <i>By Bonnie Weinstein</i> | |
| Hurricanes and Capitalism | 6 |
| <i>By Margaret Kimberly</i> | |
| Trillions for New Nuclear Weapons | 7 |
| <i>By John LaForge</i> | |
| Our Ever-Deadlier Police State | 8 |
| <i>By Chris Hedges</i> | |
| Turning the Victim Into the Criminal | 11 |
| <i>By Greg Palast and Zach D. Roberts</i> | |
| Black Panthers Didn't Fight Symbols | 12 |
| <i>By Glen Ford</i> | |
| FBI Targets Black "Ideology" | 13 |
| <i>By Glen Ford</i> | |
| Social Democracy or Revolutionary Socialism? | 14 |
| <i>By the Eugene Debs Caucus of the Democratic Socialists of America</i> | |
| Protest Alone Won't Stop Fascism | 17 |
| <i>By Shamus Cooke</i> | |
| How You Can Organize for Socialism Today | 21 |
| <i>By Dorian B. and Danny Katch</i> | |
| Winning Universal Healthcare | 23 |
| <i>By Antonio Balmer</i> | |
| Trump-Goldman Sachs Tax Cut for the Rich | 26 |
| <i>By Jack Rasmus</i> | |
| How Billionaires Become Billionaires | 30 |
| <i>By James Petras</i> | |
| The Social Security "Big Lie" | 33 |
| <i>By Dr. Nayvin Gordon</i> | |
| Drugs, Money and Political Prostitution | 34 |
| <i>By Dr. Nayvin Gordon</i> | |
| Bill Clinton's Favorite African | 35 |
| <i>By Ann Garrison</i> | |
| U.S. War in West Africa | 37 |
| <i>By Eddie Haywood</i> | |
| Indonesia's "Communist Ghosts" | 39 |
| <i>By Andre Vltchek</i> | |
| Fanon's Knife and Puerto Rico | 43 |
| <i>By José Tirado</i> | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Puerto Rico and the Jones Act Conundrum | 45 |
| <i>By Jack Heyman</i> | |

| | |
|---|----|
| The Genocide of the Rohingya | 48 |
| <i>By Ramzy Baroud</i> | |

| | |
|---|----|
| When Is Genocide Genocide? | 50 |
| <i>By Amal De Chickera</i> | |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Britain's "New Politics" | 53 |
| <i>By John Pilger</i> | |

Incarceration Nation

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Dennis Banks ¡Presente! | 2 |
| <i>By Leonard Peltier</i> | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Major: Battling on Two Fronts | 56 |
| <i>By Mumia Abu-Jamal</i> | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Kneeling for Justice | 56 |
| <i>By Mumia Abu-Jamal</i> | |

| | |
|---|----|
| Puerto Rico—A Colony by Any Name | 57 |
| <i>By Mumia Abu-Jamal</i> | |

| | |
|---|----|
| Herman Bell Under Attack | 57 |
| <i>By kihana miraya ross, Introduction by Akiba Solomon</i> | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Confederate Monuments Celebrate Yesterday's Slavery and Racism, U.S. Prisons Practice Slavery and Racism Today (2017) | 59 |
| <i>By Kevin "Rashid" Johnson</i> | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Why is Jeremiah Tatum in Florida's Solitary Confinement? .. | 63 |
| <i>By Kevin Rashid Johnson</i> | |

| | |
|---|----|
| Major Tillery: Still Fighting for Justice! | 75 |
| <i>By Justice for Major Tillery</i> | |

Environment

| | |
|---|----|
| Hurricanes, Global Warming, Environmental Racism and Anti-Immigrant Laws | 64 |
| <i>By Barry Sheppard</i> | |

Reviews

| | |
|---|----|
| Corporate Assault on Science | 67 |
| <i>By Murray Dobbin</i> | |

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Killing of History | 68 |
| <i>By John Pilger</i> | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Eve of Destruction...Or Revolution? | 70 |
| <i>By Ron Jacobs</i> | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Letter to the Editor | 67 |
|-----------------------------------|----|

Socialist Viewpoint (ISSN 1535-5438) is published bi-monthly by the Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110. Rates: For one year (6 issues): Introductory rate in the U.S. \$20.00; Regular rate in the U.S. \$30.00; Bargain rate: \$35.00 for two years; All other countries \$50.00 (Money orders, checks, etc., should be in U.S. dollars.)

Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, California.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Socialist Viewpoint, 60 29th Street, #429, San Francisco, CA 94110

California Burning, Puerto Rico Drowning

BY BONNIE WEINSTEIN

Preventing or coping with natural disasters can only be managed by massive collective efforts unhampered by economic restrictions. That means that society must be structured so that the health and safety of all must be our priority.

But this is not how capitalism works. Capitalism breeds chaos because its priority is to maximize profits above all else. And when natural disasters do occur, the capitalist class blames the unpreparedness of individuals for the hardship they endure, and leaves the responsibility to rebuild up to them. Those with the most money and the best insurance coverage can rebuild. Those who can't afford insurance, or even a home of their own, are just plain out of luck.

This logic of capitalism was reflected in an October 13, 2017 *CounterPunch* article by George Wuerthner titled, "Why California is Burning,"¹ which claims that it's the individual who must be responsible for preventing fires:

"If you want to save your community, you must have mandatory fire wise policies that are enforced.... But when your neighbor fails to protect their home [clearing brush and fireproofing their homes], they are demonstrating a lack of community value and a selfish attitude towards the rest of the town.... Wildfire in your neighborhood...can be reduced or prevented with reasonable building codes and mandatory fire-wise regulations."

What Wuerthner gets wrong is that many people can't afford or, due to age, illness, *etc.*, are unable to clear their land or fireproof their homes. It's the same in flood zones and hurricane pathways, or in earthquake country. It's insane to leave this up to the individual.

Were the people in New Orleans supposed to have shored up the levees on their days off work? Were the victims of floods supposed to go out and rebuild the dams or move their homes away from the flood zones on their

own? What were the people of Puerto Rico supposed to do? Move their island out of hurricane Maria's path? And the same holds true for those living in earthquake country. There's just so much one can do to shore up a home before a giant earthquake hits.

And, of course, in every natural disaster, it's the poor who suffer the most hardship and hazard, and who get the least help before *and* after disaster strikes.

Capitalist war and environmental plunder

And it doesn't only apply to natural disasters. In war, masses of people, now in the hundreds-of-millions, have been forced to migrate due to the bombings that have destroyed their land and homes, and to the poverty brought about by capitalist greed. We are seeing our environment destroyed by mining and oil drilling; by deforestation in order to graze cattle or plant more profitable crops; by the contamination of our land and water by corporate irresponsibility, like what has happened with the lead-contaminated water in Flint, Michigan—and by the wholesale destruction of our environment by giant corporations whose only concern is profits. In fact, it is suspected that Pacific Gas and Electric's power lines, woven through uncleared, drought-ridden forests, which were blown down by heavy winds, caused the California fires.

Environmental catastrophes are not the result of individual neglect, just as war isn't about one group of people hating another. Wars, and the devastation brought about by natural disasters made worse by global warming, and the failure to ensure a safe environment for all, are the products of capitalism.



HOLT LABOR LIBRARY

4444 Geary Blvd., Suite 207
San Francisco, CA 94118
phone: 415-387-5700
email: holtlabor@holtlaborlibrary.org

Labor Studies & Radical History

- Over 6,000 labor & socialist books and pamphlets
- 90 current subscriptions to labor & left periodicals
- 300 labor & radical movies and documentaries
- Trotskyist bulletins, documents, and papers
- Scrapbooks & ephemera from the Anti-Vietnam War movement and Fairplay for Cuba
- Audiotapes of classes by Tom Kerry & Larry Trainor

Monday through Friday
7:00 am - 3:00 pm
Appointment suggested

Visit us on the web: <http://www.holtlaborlibrary.org>

Natural and un-natural disasters

While all natural disasters can't be prevented, wars and corporate environmental destruction can. Global warming can be reversed and environmental destruction can be repaired, but not by individuals. This must be a massive planned effort by all of us. And the only way to make these changes is to get rid of the cause, *i.e.*, the profit-driven system of capitalism.

Indeed, while all of these catastrophes are happening, the most wealthy and powerful country in the world, with the most powerful and prolific weapons of mass destruction, the U.S., is planning to build even more, and more-lethal, weapons.

An October 18, 2017 *CounterPunch* article by Chris Ernesto titled "Funding for War vs. Natural Disasters"² illustrates capitalism's inability to alleviate natural catastrophes while pouring trillions into war and destruction:

"Nearly one month after being crushed by Hurricane Maria, 85 percent of Puerto Ricans still do not have electricity, and 40 percent do not have running water, and people from the Southwest and the Southeast U.S. continue to struggle with the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey...."

In callous response to this reality, the president of the United States, Donald Trump, called the people of Puerto Rico "lazy," implying they are individually responsible for cleaning up the massive environmental crisis they now face.

Yet, in fact, according to the same article, "Congress appropriates more than 70 times the amount of money for the military as it does for the Federal Emergency Management Administration's (FEMA) Disaster Relief Fund: \$700 billion for the U.S. Military, and \$9.9 billion for FEMA Disaster Relief."

And this does not include "...spending \$1.25 trillion dollars to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and \$566 bil-

lion to build the Navy a 308-ship fleet..."

The U.S. war budget—now in the trillions of dollars yearly—is more massive than all other countries combined! If these commanders of capital are allowed to continue in their path of mass economic plunder and destruction we *will* be looking at the end of the world, literally.

It is no wonder individuals in our society go insane and take their fear and aggression out on innocent people. That is what our irrational capitalist governments do on a daily basis.

That is what war is—the murder of innocent people that have no control over their circumstances; no control over their governments; no control over their economic situation; no control over the weapons their governments produce in the world of capitalist competition for profits—with the U.S. at the top of the heap of despots currently in control. These are not democratic choices made by the masses! These are capitalists' imperative to rule the world in their own interests.

The capitalists care about nothing except their wealth and power. And, in order to maintain that control, they must resort to war, plunder *and* environmental destruction.

They must drill, drill, drill with abandon. They must blow off moun-

taintops. They must chop down rain forests. They must bomb the innocent. They must pollute the oceans, lakes and air. They must incarcerate the masses. They must order their police to shoot-to-kill. They must sell their automatic weapons of mass destruction to the highest bidders. Because that is how they maintain their power over us—by creating a world of fear and chaos—blinding us to our common human interests of living in a peaceful and plentiful world shared by all. They want us at war with one another. They thrive on spreading race, class, religious and ethnic hatred where none instinctively exists.

This is not human nature. This is capitalist nature. And only we, the masses of working people across the globe, have the power to end this insanity by building a world where human interests and the welfare of our planet are our collective concerns, and the fruits of our labor are shared equally by all. This is our true human nature—to work together to save and protect our world—this is what socialism is all about.

1 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/13/why-california-is-burning/>

2 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/18/funding-for-war-vs-natural-disasters/>



Hurricanes and Capitalism

BY MARGARET KIMBERLY

Recent hurricanes in Texas and Florida reveal a great deal about the United States and how little it does for its people. Of course hurricane winds destroy material things and injure and kill humans. But natural disasters also destroy the myths of American democracy, exceptionalism and greatness.

The people of Houston live in a city, which has no zoning regulations, where petro chemical companies control politics and therefore have an unjust impact on their lives. Floridians live under a similar system, where right wing politics rule and no effort is spared to punish people because they are poor.

By every measure, America is a country where millions struggle on a daily basis because they have little or no income. Democrat Bill Clinton ended the right to public assistance twenty years ago and of course poverty has increased. Even American workers are poor, with half of them earning less than \$31,000 per year. An unknown number don't work at all, with official statistics omitting the plight of people who may not have worked for years—if ever.

These truths are too inconvenient to be exposed in a country that loves to love itself. But the propaganda of a great country is harder to promote when Texans and Floridians suffer not just because of nature but because the system is not meant to help them. In America everyone is on their own in a dystopian survival of the fittest nightmare. The only money that arrives for disaster victims comes from dubious private charities like the Red Cross. In an ideal society the government would repair homes, replace lost property and take other actions to make people whole again.

Twelve years after hurricane Katrina little has changed. When disaster strikes the Red Cross fills its coffers as well

meaning individuals contribute in hopes of assisting others in need. The organization has been exposed as a racket, providing a meal and a blanket but little else, even as it markets itself as the most reliable charity in times of crisis.

If America is the world's only super power it is because it has the largest military in the world and trillions of dollars in its treasury. Its military isn't mobilized to move people away from natural disaster because that is not why it exists. The military industrial complex has two purposes; making money for corporate interests and intimidating the rest of the world into complying with American dictates. This is a rich country, but the presence of a strong currency and rich individuals do nothing to help people devastated by acts of nature.

**This is a rich country,
but the presence of a
strong currency and rich
individuals do nothing
to help people devastated
by acts of nature.**

The suffering in Texas and Florida shines a light on everyone's condition in a dog-eat-dog society. No one can expect a helping hand unless they are already among the haves. Democrats and Republicans work together to reduce the tax burden on the wealthy but do nothing to raise the minimum wage. Corporations like Walmart always get tax relief to operate and also governmental relief for their impoverished employees. Cities and states race to the bottom to compete for the favors of the already wealthy and waste the public's money in dubious ventures.

Yet after all the bowing and scraping to wealthy individuals and corporations the masses of people can expect nothing when they are in need. Evacuation plans don't accommodate the needs of poor people. Those in already dire straits may not be able to access shelter, if any can be found. Floridians fleeing hurricane Irma often found no room at the inn when they heeded warnings from officials.

The impact of climate change is and should be a topic for discussion in the wake of a devastating tropical storm season. It is easy to point fingers at Donald Trump, who has already chosen to remove the United States from the most recent international climate agreement. But Trump has only been president for eight months. The damage to the ecosystem began decades ago and the pre-Trump Republicans and Democrats had no interest in acting to save all life on the planet.

Democrats like Clinton and Barack Obama talked a good game, but they acquiesced as much as Republicans did to the fossil fuel and other industries that are responsible for global warming. They allowed oil drilling offshore and on public lands. They promoted the use of coal. They did so because they follow the rules set by corporate interests.

Because capital is in control, tropical storms and droughts are occurring with greater severity and imperiling life around the world. It isn't surprising that so little is done to protect humanity in these circumstances. The same system that creates catastrophes is unlikely to stem the consequences created by them.

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 13, 2017

<https://www.blackagendareport.com/freedom-rider-hurricanes-and-capitalism>

Trillions for New Nuclear Weapons

By JOHN LAFORGE

While much of the world pursues the abolition of nuclear weapons—embraced by the adoption July 7 by 122 nations of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons—the militarized Trump White House is pursuing plans for a trillion-dollar rebuild of the entire U.S. nuclear weapons complex. The enormous, extravagant program is designed to produce 80 new nuclear warheads every year, including three new warhead types, a new \$20 billion nuclear-armed Long Range Standoff (LRSO) weapon, a new \$12 billion B61 nuclear gravity bomb, a new fleet of nuclear-armed submarines, and a new \$100 billion intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) system.

As *WallStreet.com* online reported recently, “A review by the Arms Control Association, a nonpartisan, nuclear weapons watchdog, [found] the total 30-year cost of the program could rise to \$1.5 trillion”—\$500 billion beyond what the Obama Administration first proposed in 2016. Beyond the colossal expense, the program appears to be a flagrant violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty.

The Trump administration must believe that urgent domestic and global humanitarian crises can be solved using guns since traditionally civilian White House Chief of Staff is Marine Corps General James Kelly, his National Security Advisor is Army General HR McMaster, and his Defense Secretary is Marine Corps General James “Mad Dog” Mattis.

On Aug. 8, the militarized Energy Department and U.S. Air Force conducted two tests of the new “B61-12” gravity bomb at Nevada’s Tonopah Test Range. The unarmed bomb test—using an F-15E jet fighter, currently employed in wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya—demonstrated the

jet’s ability to wage nuclear war. The B61-12 program “is progressing on schedule,” said Phil Calbos, the Acting Deputy Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration. NNSA builds and maintains U.S. nuclear warheads. Although NNSA is nominally a civilian agency, Mr. Calbos graduated from West Point and studied at the Pentagon’s National War College.

The B61-12 bomb test involved new “tailfin” hardware designed by Boeing Corporation. NNSA wants the first B61-12s to be finished in 2022 and to ship 180 of them to five “nuclear sharing” NATO partners in Europe—replacing the ones already there. Critical German, Dutch, and Belgian politicians have called for the permanent removal of all U.S. nuclear weapons, and the Air Force itself may soon remove its B61s from Turkey. Another 400 to 600 of the new B61s are set to be built to replace those now used on long-range Air Force B-52 and B-1 bombers.

The Air Force also granted \$349 million in contracts to Boeing, and \$329 to Northrop Grumman in August, and put the two giant weapons contractors into competition to replace today’s arsenal of 450 Minuteman III ICBMs. *Popular Mechanics* reports that “Northrop Grumman and Boeing each have been awarded just under \$350 million to churn out Technology Maturation and Risk Reduction studies before the Air Force picks a single winner.” One of the two can expect to win the plum \$100 billion contract to build the new ICBMs, dubbed Ground Based Strategic Deterrent.

This push for a replacement ICBM flies in the face of authoritative calls for their abolition. In January 2015, General/Secretary Mattis told the

Senate Armed Services Committee, “You should ask, ‘Is it time to reduce the triad...removing the land-based missiles?’” Speaking December 3, 2015, former Defense Secretary William Perry called for retiring land-based missiles altogether saying, “ICBMs aren’t necessary...they’re not needed. Any reasonable definition of deterrence will not require that third leg.” (Other “legs” are submarines and long-range bombers.) Secretary Perry’s commentaries in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* last year were titled respectively, “Why It’s Safe to Scrap America’s ICBMs,” and “Mr. President, kill the new Cruise missile” (the LRSO).

Additionally, a blue-ribbon commission chaired in 2012 by General James Cartwright, a former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for eliminating the ICBM system, not replacing it. At a Senate hearing later in 2012, General Cartwright testified that the ICBMs could be scrapped without leaving the U.S. at risk. Cartwright’s commission report was signed by then Senator and soon-to-be Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, and recommended a U.S. nuclear arsenal with none left on ICBMs.

Congressional pleas for austerity, fiscal responsibility, and budget cutting should be lampooned and rejected unless the trillion dollar-plus nuclear weapons plan—prohibited now by the Non-Proliferation Treaty and soon by the Nuclear Weapon Treaty Ban—is zeroed out first.

—*CounterPunch*, October 6, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/06/us-bomb-tests-and-bidding-wars-herald-new-unlawful-1-5-trillion-nuclear-weapons-complex/>

Our Ever-Deadlier Police State

BY CHRIS HEDGES

None of the reforms, increased training, diversity programs, community outreach and gimmicks such as body cameras have blunted America's deadly police assault, especially against poor people of color. Police forces in the United States—which, according to *The Washington Post*, have fatally shot 782 people this year—are unaccountable, militarized monstrosities that spread fear and terror in poor communities. By comparison, police in England and Wales killed 62 people in the 27 years between the start of 1990 and the end of 2016.

Police officers have become rogue predators in impoverished communities. Under U.S. forfeiture laws, police indiscriminately seize money, real estate, automobiles and other assets. In many cities, traffic, parking and other fines are little more than legalized extortion that funds local government and turns jails into debtor prisons.

Because of a failed court system, millions of young men and women are railroaded into prison, many for non-violent offenses. SWAT teams with military weapons burst into homes often under warrants for nonviolent offenses, sometimes shooting those inside. Trigger-happy cops pump multiple rounds into the backs of unarmed men and women and are rarely charged with murder. And for poor Americans, basic constitutional rights, including due process, were effectively abolished decades ago.

Jonathan Simon's *Governing Through Crime* and Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* point out that what is defined and targeted as criminal activity by the police and the courts is largely determined by racial inequality and class, and most importantly by the potential of targeted groups to cause social and political

unrest. Criminal policy, as sociologist Alex S. Vitale writes in his new book, *The End of Policing*, “is structured around the use of punishment to manage the ‘dangerous classes,’ masquerading as a system of justice.”

**...for poor Americans,
basic constitutional
rights, including due
process, were effectively
abolished decades ago**

The criminal justice system, at the same time, refuses to hold Wall Street banks, corporations and oligarchs accountable for crimes that have caused incalculable damage to the global economy and the ecosystem. None of the bankers who committed massive acts of fraud and were responsible for the financial collapse in 2008 have gone to prison even though their crimes resulted in widespread unemployment, millions of evictions and foreclosures, homelessness, bankruptcies and the looting of the U.S. Treasury to bail out financial speculators at taxpayer expense. We live in a two-tiered legal system, one in which poor people are harassed, arrested and jailed for absurd infractions, such as selling loose cigarettes—which led to Eric Garner being choked to death by a New York City policeman in 2014—while crimes of appalling magnitude that wiped out 40 percent of the world's wealth are dealt with through tepid administrative controls, symbolic fines and civil enforcement.

The grotesque distortions of the judicial system and the aggressive war on the poor by the police will get worse under President Trump and Attorney

General Jeff Sessions. There has been a rollback of President Barack Obama's 2015 restrictions on the 1033 Program, a 1989 congressional action that allows the transfer of military weaponry, including grenade launchers, armored personnel carriers and .50-caliber machine guns, from the federal government to local police forces. Since 1997, the Department of Defense has turned over a staggering \$5.1 billion in military hardware to police departments.

The Trump administration also is resurrecting private prisons in the federal prison system, accelerating the so-called war on drugs, stacking the courts with right-wing “law and order” judges and preaching the divisive politics of punishment and retribution. Police unions enthusiastically embrace these actions, seeing in them a return to the Wild West mentality that characterized the brutality of police departments in the 1960s and 1970s, when radicals, especially Black radicals, were murdered with impunity at the hands of law enforcement. The Praetorian Guard of the elites, as in all totalitarian systems, will soon be beyond the reach of the law. As Vitale writes in his book, “Our entire criminal justice system has become a gigantic revenge factory.”

The arguments—including the racist one about “superpredators”—used to justify the expansion of police power have no credibility, as the gun violence in south Chicago, abject failure of the war on drugs and vast expansion of the prison system over the last 40 years illustrate. The problem is not ultimately in policing techniques and procedures; it is in the increasing reliance on the police as a form of social control to buttress a system of corporate capitalism that has turned the working poor into modern-day serfs and abandoned whole segments of the society.

Government no longer makes any attempt to ameliorate racial and economic inequality. Instead, it criminalizes poverty. It has turned the poor into one more cash crop for the rich.

“By conceptualizing the problem of policing as one of inadequate training and professionalization, reformers fail to directly address how the very nature of policing and the legal system served to maintain and exacerbate racial inequality,” Vitale writes. “By calling for colorblind ‘law and order’ they strengthen a system that puts people of color at a structural disadvantage. At the root, they fail to appreciate that the basic nature of the police, since its earliest origins, is to be a tool for managing inequality and maintaining the *status quo*. Police reforms that fail to directly address this reality are doomed to reproduce it. ...Well-trained police following proper procedures are still going to be arresting people for mostly low-level offenses, and the burden of that will continue to fall primarily on communities of color because that is how the system is designed to operate—not because of the biases or misunderstandings of officers.”

In a recent interview, Vitale told me, “We’ve been waging a war on drugs for 40 years by putting people in prison for ever longer sentences. Yet drugs are cheaper, easier to get, and at a higher quality than they’ve ever been. Any high school student in America can get any kind of drugs they want. Yet we persist in this idea that the way to respond to the problem of drugs, and many other social problems, is through arrest, courts, punishments, prisons. This is what Trump is playing to. This idea that the only appropriate role for the state is one of coercion and threats—whether it’s in the foreign policy sphere or in the domestic sphere.”

As Vitale writes in his book, police forces were not formed to ensure public safety or prevent crime. They were created by the property classes to maintain

economic and political dominance and exert control over slaves, the poor, dissidents and labor unions that challenged the wealthy’s hold on power and ability to amass personal fortunes. Many of America’s policing techniques, including widespread surveillance, were pioneered and perfected in colonies of the U.S. and then brought back to police departments in the homeland. Blacks in the South had to be controlled, and labor unions and radical socialists in the industrial Northeast and Midwest had to be broken.

**Since 1997, the
Department of Defense
has turned over a
staggering \$5.1 billion in
military hardware to
police departments.**

The fundamental role of the police has never changed. Paul Butler in his book *Chokehold: Policing Black Men* and James Forman Jr. in his book *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* echo Vitale’s point that the war on drugs “has never been about public health or public safety. It’s been about providing a cover for aggressive and invasive policing that targets almost exclusively people of color.”

“People often point to the London Metropolitan Police, who were formed in the 1820s by Sir Robert Peel,” Vitale said. “They are held up as this liberal ideal of a dispassionate, politically neutral police with the support of the citizenry. But this really misreads the history. Peel is sent to manage the British occupation of Ireland. He’s confronted with a dilemma. Historically, peasant uprisings, rural outrages were dealt with by either the local militia or the British military. In the wake of the

Napoleonic Wars, in the need for soldiers in other parts of the British Empire, he is having more and more difficulty managing these disorders. In addition, when he does call out the militia, they often open fire on the crowd and kill lots of people, creating martyrs and inflaming further unrest. He said, ‘I need a force that can manage these outrages without inflaming passions further.’ He developed the Peace Preservation Force, which was the first attempt to create a hybrid military-civilian force that can try to win over the population by embedding itself in the local communities, taking on some crime control functions, but its primary purpose was always to manage the occupation. He then exports that model to London as the industrial working classes are flooding the city, dealing with poverty, cycles of boom and bust in the economy, and that becomes their primary mission.”

“The creation of the very first state police force in the United States was the Pennsylvania State Police in 1905,” Vitale said. “For the same reasons. It was modeled similarly on U.S. occupation forces in the Philippines. There was a back and forth with personnel and ideas. What happened was local police were unable to manage the coal strikes and iron strikes. ...They needed a force that was more adherent to the interest of capital. ...Interestingly, for these small-town police forces in a coal mining town there was sometimes sympathy. They wouldn’t open fire on the strikers. So, the state police force was created to be that strong arm for the law. Again, the direct connection between colonialism and the domestic management of workers. ...It’s a two-way exchange. As we’re developing ideas throughout our own colonial undertakings, bringing those ideas home, and then refining them and shipping them back to our partners around the world who are often despotic regimes with close economic

relationships to the United States. There's a very sad history here of the U.S. exporting basically models of policing that morph into death squads and horrible human rights abuses."

The almost exclusive reliance on militarized police to deal with profound inequality and social problems is turning poor neighborhoods in cities such as Chicago into miniature failed states, ones where destitute young men and women join a gang for security and income and engage in battles with other gangs and the police. The "broken windows" policy shifts the burden for poverty onto the poor. It criminalizes minor infractions, arguing that disorder produces crime and upending decades of research about the causes of crime.

"As poverty deepens and housing prices rise, government support for affordable housing has evaporated, leaving in its wake a combination of homeless shelters and aggressive broken-windows-oriented policing," Vitale writes. "As mental health facilities close, police become the first

responders to calls for assistance with mental health crises. As youth are left without adequate schools, jobs, or recreational facilities, they form gangs for mutual protection or participate in the black markets of stolen goods, drugs, and sex to survive and are ruthlessly criminalized. Modern policing is largely a war on the poor that does little to make people safer or communities stronger, and even when it does, this is accomplished through the most coercive forms of state power that destroy the lives of millions."

...the basic nature of the police, since its earliest origins, is to be a tool for managing inequality and maintaining the *status quo*

The accelerated assault on the poor and the growing omnipotence of the

police signal our transformation into an authoritarian state in which the rich and the powerful are not subject to the rule of law. The Trump administration will promote none of the conditions that could ameliorate this crisis—affordable housing; well-paying jobs; safe and nurturing schools that do not charge tuition; better mental health facilities; efficient public transportation; the rebuilding of the nation's infrastructure; demilitarized police forces in which most officers do not carry weapons; universal, government-funded healthcare; an end to the predatory loans and unethical practices of big banks; and reparations to African-Americans and an end to racial segregation. Trump and most of those he has appointed to positions of power disdain the poor as a dead weight on society. They blame stricken populations for their own misery. They seek to subjugate the poor, especially those of color, through police violence, ever harsher forms of punishment and an expansion of the prison system.

"We need an effective system of crime prevention and control in our communities, but that is not what the current system is," Alexander writes in *The New Jim Crow*. "The system is better designed to create crime, and a perpetual class of people labeled criminal. ...Saying mass incarceration is an abysmal failure makes sense, though only if one assumes that the criminal justice system is designed to prevent and control crime. But if mass incarceration is understood as a system of social control—specifically, racial control—then the system is a fantastic success."

—*truthdig*, October 22, 2017

<https://www.truthdig.com/articles/ever-deadlier-police-state/>



Turning the Victim Into the Criminal

Charlottesville: Victim of Neo-Nazi beating charged with assault

BY GREG PALAST AND ZACH D. ROBERTS

African-American schoolteacher, DeAndre Harris, victim of a beating by neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August, has been charged with assaulting the white supremacists who beat him with boards, iron rods, and brass knuckles.

That is correct. Harris, who was shown being beaten close to death in photos released by *Truthout* and carried worldwide, has now been charged with the same crime as his attackers: “unlawful wounding.”

Several of Harris’ attackers remain on the run—and local and federal officials show little interest in going after them. Yet, the Charlottesville Police Department issued a warrant to arrest Harris on October 9.

Harris is accused of taking a swing at a neo-Nazi who tried to stab a friend of Harris’ with the staff of a flagpole holding a Confederate flag. On the advice of his lawyer, Harris was unable to be reached for comment.

Zach Roberts, for *Truthout*, spoke with Lee Merritt, Harris’s attorney and a legal specialist on police brutality and corruption. Merritt stated, “This is probably the most extreme case I’ve seen. Not only is [the victim] charged with a crime but he’s charged at the same level as the men who broke his bones, who caused serious bodily injuries, caused him to get 18 staples in his head...the men who beat him within an inch of his life. [Harris] is getting the same charge as [those] involved in a violent supremacist group who were involved in attacks, not only of DeAndre, but attacks of other people all weekend.”

It should be noted that our photographer, Roberts, was also attacked with what appears to be a wooden flagstaff, by a man identified as Dan Borden of

Cincinnati, one of those charged in the attack on Harris.

White supremacist Borden, hours before attacking Harris, threw the metal-tipped wood at photographer Roberts’ head. Roberts photographed the weapon as it whizzed by his head.

A magistrate judge, without talking to witness Roberts, issued a warrant, apparently on the complaint of lawyers for the white nationalists.

Charlottesville police have charged two of Harris’s attackers, but only after a national campaign demanded they do so. One charged, Dan Borden, is shown beating Harris with a four-foot piece of lumber.

The other, Michael Ramos, who claims he acted in self-defense, is shown striking Harris with brass knuckles while Harris is helpless on the ground.

On August 14, U.S. Attorney General Sessions said that neo-Nazi brutality in Charlottesville was the Justice Department’s top priority. “There’s no bigger case right now we’re working on.”

So far, federal authorities have taken no action to identify the man holding what appears to be a 9mm Glock semi-automatic handgun threatening Harris, despite high-resolution photos supplied by Roberts to the FBI.

Crossing state lines with intent to cause harm is a federal offense. Nevertheless, direct pleas to FBI agents by this reporter have failed to get Justice Department action to charge Harris’ attackers and Roberts’ assailant with these crimes.

Days after the attack, one FBI agent assigned to the investigation told *Truthout* he was “appalled” by the lack of immediate response to Roberts’ offer of photos to identify Harris’ attackers, but insisted the Department would act. As of today, two months on, there is no sign Sessions’ Department has moved to identify nor apprehend Harris’s attackers.

(Photos by Zach D. Roberts © 2017)

—*Truthout*, October 10, 2017

<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/42218-charlottesville-victim-of-neo-nazi-beating-charged-with-assault>



Black Panthers Didn't Fight Symbols

BY GLEN FORD

September 13, 2017—New York state prison guards assaulted and seriously injured 69 year-old former Black Panther Herman Bell this week, a totally unprovoked beating timed to sabotage his chances for parole after more than 40 years behind bars. In neighboring New Jersey, former Panther, Sundiata Acoli, was denied parole last December shortly before his 80th birthday. Acoli has been behind bars since 1973, and eligible for parole since 1992. His next parole hearing won't come up for another 15 years—when Acoli is 95 years old.

Although the U.S. is home to five times more whites than Blacks, African Americans outnumber whites in U.S. prisons and jails.

Dozens of elderly Black activists remain entombed in a gulag that has expanded seven-fold since the federal government crushed the Black liberation movement and established a national Black Mass Incarceration State. Although slightly less than half the 2.3 million gulag inmates are African Americans, the system's founding rationale and central mission is race-based: to contain, control, and facilitate the removal of Black people from U.S. society. Although the U.S. is home to five times more whites than Blacks, African Americans outnumber whites in U.S. prisons and jails.

Black mass incarceration has been quite popular, historically—a proven vote-getter among whites in all regions of the country. However, what goes

around, comes around. In building the world's largest prison system to house the mostly non-white prey of the planet's most intrusive police state, the U.S. has condemned to the dungeons millions of non-targeted whites—unintended, collateral damage of the race wars that birthed the nation and built an empire.

As *Black Agenda Report* contributor Danny Haiphong writes in this week's issue, "Prisons in the U.S. are monuments that enforce terror against oppressed people."¹ Indeed, these monuments to present-day oppression are far more numerous than the Confederate symbols that are the focus of current conflict. The Southern Poverty Law Center has identified 1,503 physical symbols of the Confederacy, including 718 monuments and statues and 109 public schools, 80 counties and ten military bases named for Confederate icons. Yet, Johnny Reb's footprint on the landscape is tiny compared to the 5,000 state and federal prisons and jails, plus about 1,000 juvenile and tribal detention facilities that crater the nation—a vast infrastructure of race and class rule.

The so-called "alt-right" has been hard-pressed to gather more than a few hundred Nazis, Klansmen and right-wing militia to make a stand around Confederate landmarks. This rag-tag "fascist threat" is dwarfed by the 431,600 prison guards that staff America's penal monuments to the dictatorship of rich, white men.

It is commendable and necessary to go blow-for-blow in the streets against predatory racist gangs. It is also clear that Donald Trump is giving political aid and comfort to today's sons and daughters of the old Confederacy who, although not yet able to mass in large numbers, could do so in the future. But

that threat pales in comparison to the three-quarters-of-a-million sworn police officers that strut the streets of America, killing Black and Brown people with impunity and dragging hundreds-of-thousands into the gulag every year. According to *Police magazine*, 84 percent of cops supported Donald Trump for president. The statistic is no surprise, but points up the real threat to Black lives and the rule of law: the state, itself.

The same state that Herman Bell and Sundiata Acoli resisted, two generations ago.

—*Black Agenda Report*, September 13, 2017

<https://www.blackagendareport.com/black-panthers-didnt-fight-symbols>

1 "The United States is a Racist Monument, Tear it Down!"

<https://blackagendareport.com/united-states-racist-monument-tear-it-down>

Johnny Reb's footprint on the landscape is tiny compared to the 5,000 state and federal prisons and jails, plus about 1,000 juvenile and tribal detention facilities that crater the nation—a vast infrastructure of race and class rule.

FBI Targets Black “Ideology”

BY GLEN FORD

The FBI has apparently chosen a new heading under which to lump Black Americans targeted for political persecution: “Black Identity Extremists.” There’s a simple explanation for the new categorization. The FBI is a bureaucracy whose day-to-day work involves drawing up lists of people and organizations to be surveilled, disrupted and prosecuted. The dramatic increase in Black “movement” activity since the 2014 police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, has presented the FBI with a much larger field of targets, including youthful elements loosely grouped under the Black Lives Matter banner. When bureaucracies compile new lists, they typically file them under new names.

In a sense, the change in nomenclature is an acknowledgement by the FBI that, after nearly two generations of Black political stagnation and capitulation, there is finally a Black “movement” with the potential to upset the *status quo*. The leaked FBI counterterrorism division report, scooped by *Foreign Policy* magazine, also signifies that Black grassroots political activity is under the purview of the national security state’s War on Terror and, therefore, subject to the awesome array of repressive measures authorized to law enforcement and intelligence agencies since 9/11.

COINTELPRO—the FBI’s program to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” those designated as enemies of the state—was itself exposed as an illegal police state mechanism in the mid-1970s. Since 2001, the government’s COINTELPRO-like programs have been superseded by a far more repressive regime, inaugurated by President George W. Bush and strengthened under Barack Obama. The post-9/11 national security state has legalized the world’s most intrusive surveillance apparatus and detention without trial or charge, a system designed

specifically to crush targeted ideologies—meaning, modes of thought and political identification.

It is in this context that the FBI’s umbrella designation “Black Identity Extremists” is so insidious and dangerous, in that it targets people based on their (stated, imagined or inferred) beliefs and ethnic loyalties, rather than specific criminal acts or even organizational affiliation. It is a catchall for blanket repression of Black activism of any kind.

The FBI mindset has clearly been shaped by its frustration with so-called “lone wolf” Islamic jihadists—individual actors not directly affiliated with Al-Qaeda or its offshoots. U.S. police and intelligence operatives speak constantly of the need to identify and neutralize Muslims in our midst that have been “radicalized” or “self-radicalized” and thus are fair game to be subjected to every tactic of entrapment and dirty tricks. The FBI views Black activists in the same light—as potentially dangerous, “self-radicalized” threats. The counterterrorism division report cites six armed attacks on U.S. cops in the post-Ferguson period, including Dallas, Baton Rouge and New York City, as justification for its ideology-based categorization of the Black menace. Micah Johnson, who shot 11 cops in Dallas, “appeared to have been influenced by BIE ideology” based on his “journal writings and statements to police,” said the Bureau.

“BIE ideology” is whatever the FBI thinks it is. In the tortured logic of white supremacist law and order, Black identification with other Blacks is inherently subversive and a *prima facie* justification for surveillance. The Bureau’s BIE list could eventually accommodate every conceivable political tendency of Black thought—including the “ideologies” resident in the venerable old NAACP, which issued a statement on the leaked FBI document.

“In a time when white supremacists are marching down city streets with loaded weapons and tiki torches—organizing rallies of terror around the country—it comes as a great shock that the FBI would decide to target Black identity groups protesting police brutality and their right to exist free of harm, as a threat,” said NAACP president and CEO Derrick Johnson.

Johnson then attempts to lay the blame for this state of affairs on President Trump, who has “emboldened...right-wing extremists, white nationalists and white supremacists.” But, the FBI has been surveilling Black Lives Matter activists ever since the explosion of resistance in Ferguson. As early as December 2014, the FBI was discovered to have tracked Black Lives Matter activists at the huge Mall of the Americas in Bloomington, Minnesota, in conjunction with state and local officers of the Joint Terrorism Task Force. In July of 2015 *The Intercept* reported that “Feds Regularly Monitored Black Lives Matter Since Ferguson,” exposing extensive surveillance of the rejuvenated Black movement by the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force.

The FBI has been spying on Black activists since its founding in the early 20th century. COINTELPRO was created during the Eisenhower administration, and never died. Under President Obama, Black activists became targets of the War on Terror, and now the FBI has conjured up a rationale to criminalize African American political thought as “Black Identities Ideology.” The Bureau will ultimately decide what this ideology actually is, and whose head it is lurking in.

—*Black Agenda Report*, October 11, 2017

<https://blackagenda.com/fbi-targets-black-ideology>

Social Democracy or Revolutionary Socialism?

STATEMENT BY THE EUGENE DEBS CAUCUS OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

“The first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the movement is always the organization of the workers as an independent political party, no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers’ party.... The masses must have time and opportunity to develop and they can only have the opportunity when they have their own movement—no matter in what form so long as it is only their own movement—in which they are driven further by their own mistakes and learn wisdom by hurting themselves.”

So wrote Frederick Engels about the U.S. working class in 1886. That step—the organization of the U.S. working class as its own political party—has yet to be accomplished. But today, when both the main political parties of the U.S. capitalist class are in crisis, there is an opening like never since the 1930s. For socialists, one of the first steps in taking advantage of this opportunity would be to run independent, working class representatives for local office. These would be candidates who explicitly link the local issues with the necessity of building a mass working class political party.

With its extremely rapid growth, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) can play a vital role in helping the creation of such a party. It can put the creation of such a party on the agenda; raise the issue in the minds of millions of workers. It also has the resources to run successful independent, working class representatives for local office and start to bring these local campaigns together into one national, working class movement, independent of and opposed to the two main capitalist parties.

Liberalism

For too long, radical social movements have been sacrificed on the altar

of the Democratic Party in the name of being “practical.” Once lured into the party’s sphere of influence, these groups forfeit their independence and become subordinate to the agenda of the Democratic Party itself. In practice, this means dancing to the tune of, or never going beyond, the program of the “progressive” wing of the Democrats. That is why it is impossible to preserve the political and organizational independence of working class movements while supporting Democratic Party candidates.

We are all bound together by our common interests as a class—in other words our relationship to the “means of production.”

Taking such a step is impossible as long as we support any Democratic Party candidates. How, after all, can we explain the class nature of the Democrats, the role of their “progressive” wing as bait for the trap, the necessity of the working class to build its own party, while at the same time supporting some Democrats? Everything in the tumultuous last 12 months proves it cannot be done.

The significance of a mass working class party

First of all, we should be clear on what the working class is: This is the class that depends on selling its labor-power for a wage. This also includes those who are fraudulently classified as “independent contractors” such as Uber and Lyft drivers. It is not only the traditional blue collar workers like

construction or factory workers, but also baristas, secretaries and clerical workers, teachers, grocery clerks and even incarcerated workers. We are all bound together by our common interests as a class—in other words our relationship to the “means of production.” What is necessary, as Engels explained, is for the class to be united through its own political party.

Presently, the union leadership and the non-profits confine themselves to “pressuring the Democrats.” In reality this means allowing this capitalist-controlled party to set the political agenda. It means being unable to clearly point to the class nature of politics.

The building of a mass working class party would be a huge first step forward. It would start to place all issues on a class basis. It would start to clarify that the solutions rest on the working class. It would also open the door to revolutionary socialists starting to gain a real base in the working class.

This last point must not be forgotten, exactly because while the creation of such a party would be a huge first step, it would be only that—a first step.

Liberals think workers don’t need their own political party and can rely on the capitalist Democratic Party. The social democrats at least go beyond that and understand that workers do need their own party. However, what sort of party do they think is required?

“Mixed” economy?

The social democrats generally advocate a “mixed” economy, with some elements of nationalization (such as public utilities, railroads, *etc.*) alongside a robust, for-profit capitalist economy. The problem is that the essence of a socialist economy is democratic state planning, and it’s impossible to plan an economy where huge sectors are con-

trolled by the anarchic, for-profit market. The social democrats point to countries like Sweden as a model, but they forget that the Swedish Social Democrats have been cutting back on their social programs since 2008, and in Germany the main cuts against the social programs have been carried out by the Social Democrats too. This has been the case throughout Europe. Just like in the U.S., these societies have growing far right, chauvinist and racist movements exactly as a result of the confusion that social democracy has created there. In other words, these “socialist” countries are not socialist; they are neither run by workers nor outside the crisis of capitalism.

History of social democracy

Social democracy originated as the movement of revolutionary Marxism. However, it then degenerated and became an attempt to balance between the socialist traditions of the working class and the needs and interests of the capitalist class. At times of crisis, that balancing act was impossible and the social democratic leaders came down decisively on the side of the capitalist class.

This is what happened in the years leading up to World War I, when the different imperialist powers could only settle their rivalries through war. Throughout Europe, almost all the social democratic leaders supported their own capitalist class in that imperialist slaughter.

Following World War I and the Russian Revolution, capitalism was in another crisis and revolution was on the agenda, especially in Germany. There, it was the social democratic leadership who saved the day for capitalism, including orchestrating the murder of revolutionary leaders, Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht.

They supported their own capitalists’ imperialist ventures in Asia and Africa.

In the economic upswing following World War II, the social democrats did

produce some major reforms for the working class throughout Europe. This is what present-day supporters of social democracy point to, but now, under the economic crisis of capitalism, in most European countries it is the social democrats who are trying to preserve the profits of “their” capitalists by leading the way in cutting social benefits.

Syriza

Greece is a perfect example of the failure of social democracy. For years the Greek Socialist Party carried out cut after cut of essential services for working class people. In response, the Greek working class rose up, threw the Socialist Party out of office and voted in a radical left alternative in 2015—Syriza. This was a milestone not only for the Greek working class but for the workers’ struggle against cuts and austerity worldwide. Led by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, Syriza struggled to reverse these cuts. But exactly because of their limited strategy and program, they were unable to accomplish this and ended up carrying out the exact same attacks on the Greek working class that they’d been elected to reverse!

Chile 1973

Nor can capitalism be legislated out of existence or socialism be accomplished through the capitalist state. Take, for instance, the example of Chile’s Salvador Allende, who came to power in the early 1970s in that country. That was exactly what Allende tried to do—build socialism in Chile through the capitalist state. He ended up so antagonizing the Chilean capitalist class that—along with the CIA—they organized a military *coup*, assassinated him and tens-of-thousands of others. The Pinochet dictatorship that ruled Chile for years afterwards was one of the most brutal in Latin America’s history of brutal dictatorships.

A U.S. workers government

And how about the U.S.?

Even if a president were elected from a mass working class political party, she or he would be frustrated at every turn. Since only one third of the Senators are elected at any one cycle, the Senate would probably remain firmly under capitalist control. Even if it weren’t, the capitalists could count on the judicial system to stymie a socialist president and congress.

Then there is the rest of the state apparatus—the heads of the bureaucracies, the military brass and the police. All of these form the real base of the state—the capitalist state in this case. In a situation of real crisis, they would be used to topple a socialist-led government in the U.S., just like they have in many other countries, throughout history.

But that is not the end of the story.

Committees of struggle:

A rival to the capitalist state

A president from a mass working class party in the U.S. would only come into office in a time of tremendous turmoil, a time when tens-of-millions of workers and working class youth were in motion. It would be a time when, as Engels put it, workers would be driven further by their own mistakes. While they almost certainly would be involved in capitalist elections, workers would not simply leave matters there; they would be organizing and fighting for their needs in the streets, work places, working class communities and schools. They would be building their own organs, their own committees, to carry their struggles forward.

Among other things, these would be self-defense committees. But they would also probably involve themselves with such things as organizing classes in colleges and universities, maybe controlling prices and the flow

of goods, *etc.* In other words, they would start to rival the capitalist state.

This happened in every radical working class uprising, from that in Chile in the 1970s to the revolution against the Shah of Iran in 1978-9 to the early days of the revolution in Syria in 2011. There were even elements of this in the Seattle general strike of 1919. In that instance, the general strike committee not only ran the strike that shut down Seattle, it determined which goods (such as basic food and medicine) were allowed to be brought into the city.

In this way, a rival to the institutions of the capitalist state would start to develop. The question would start to pose itself: Which shall rule—the working class committees of struggle or the capitalist state?

Revolutionary socialists

The working class would be driven further down the road towards putting its own committees of struggle into full power in society, which means bringing down the capitalist state. But once again, history shows that they would have limited time in which to draw that conclusion and act on it. That's why it's important to have a revolutionary

socialist wing of a new mass working class party—to learn along with the working class but also to help make this unconscious learning process conscious, thereby speeding it up.

Conclusion

To sum up: A mass working class party would be the independent organizing center for the struggles of the working class, of, by, and for, itself. It would be the gathering point, coordinating body and learning center of the class struggle. This does not mean subordinating issues like racism, sexism, LGBTQ rights or the environment to the class struggle but, rather, clarifying that it is the role of the working class to resolve them through their own organization. While participating in capitalist elections is far from the only role a mass working class party would play, ultimately the party will have to either run its own candidates or it will get swept up into and become subordinate to the Democratic Party or possibly another capitalist party.

Karl Marx said that the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working classes themselves. This can only be done by relying on our own forces and overthrowing

both the political and economic system of capitalism, root and branch.

Further reading

The Gene Debs Caucus of East Bay DSA also suggests some further reading:

Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, by Lenin.

Some on the left conclude that because it's not possible to simply "vote in" socialism that therefore the working class movement should not participate in elections. This is not a new idea, and Lenin in his famous little book decisively argues against it. It's one thing, he said, for revolutionaries to reject capitalist elections; it's something entirely different for millions of workers to do so.

"Social Democracy or Capitalist Realities?"

This short article gives a little more history and analysis of social democracy and its shortcomings, not to mention outright betrayals. See it online at: <https://oaklandsocialist.com/2017/07/19/social-democracy-or-capitalist-realities/>

What is Revolution?

This pamphlet develops further the question of how, under what circumstances is a socialist revolution possible and how, through what process, can the capitalist state be overthrown. Read it online at: <https://oaklandsocialist.com/2015/02/07/what-is-revolution/>

Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, by Frederick Engels.

This is an introduction to the method and ideas of scientific socialism as postulated by Marx and Engels.

For more information, contact us at:

EDC.DSA@gmx.com

Also find us on Facebook at: DSA Eugene Debs Caucus

—Oakland Socialist, September 16, 2017

<https://oaklandsocialist.com/2017/09/16/dsa-eugene-debs-caucus-formed/>



Protest Alone Won't Stop Fascism

BY SHAMUS COOKE

When news struck that anti-Muslim protests with ties to white supremacists cancelled rallies across the country—in response to the huge anti-fascist rally in Boston—a clear victory was celebrated by the Left. A further anti-fascist victory was won in San Francisco, where a giant mobilization outnumbered a tiny smattering of far-right protesters who scurried away scared.

But these victorious battles won't end the war. The cockroaches that crawled back under the floorboards will resume their work underground, where they join a mass of fascist termites eating away at the base of the U.S. political system.

The more conscious leaders of the budding fascist movement study history's lessons. After Boston they made a strategic retreat, recognizing the balance of forces shifted against them. They'll return to fight another day on more favorable terrain. Meanwhile they're organizing.

The larger "alt right" white supremacist movement will continue to use ultra-wealthy donors and growing networks to refine their organizing in order to position themselves as the political "solution" to the deepening economic-political crisis experienced by millions of people.

Desperate people are vulnerable to fascism, and the desperation is deepening: millions are eyeball deep in debt and 80 percent live paycheck-to-paycheck, while skyrocketing healthcare costs and rising rent heat up the social pressure cooker.

It's this economic gut punch that the fascists hope to benefit from: as working people struggle to breathe the fascists hope to offer cheap, ready-made oxygen.

The fascist's ability to attract followers directly depends on the Left's failure

to lead politically. The Left's inability to organize around a bold politics has allowed the Far Right space to demagogue, since fascist ideas only seem appealing when there's no viable Left alternative. Without a well-organized revolutionary perspective the ideas of the fascist can appear radical and even "revolutionary" to the confused, scared, and desperate. It's this long game the white supremacists are focused on.

There is a battle of ideas taking place on the Internet, college campuses, and in the streets. These ideas cannot be destroyed by street protests or fists alone, especially when fascist soil is being fertilized by economic desperation. The fascist movement is experiencing a quickly evolving renaissance, shedding the provocative symbols from the past while recruiting youth and refining their populist strategy of "economic nationalism."

Whereas the fascists are educating and organizing the unorganized, the Left is often, unwittingly, pushing people into the arms of the fascists by offering confusing or contradictory ideas, allowing the fascists to retrofit Left politics for Far-Right purposes.

Fascists against free trade!

Steven Bannon hates free trade like he hates Muslims. This "America First"-style economic nationalism is a strategy that has been instrumental in helping Trump posture as a populist, fooling millions of people in the process.

The Left is, sadly, partially to blame for Trump's ability to pose as a trade-populist. For years a leading plank of the Leftists platform has been "anti-free trade," a demand vague enough for Trump to steal it and re-purpose it for the fascist agenda.

The Left was shocked when Trump campaigned on anti-free trade rheto-

ric. And after winning the election Trump tore up the Trans Pacific Partnership, which the Left had unsuccessfully demanded that Obama kill. Trump's action silenced the Left and riled up his base: In less than a month in office Trump had, seemingly, performed the most anti-establishment action since FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States from 1933 until his death in 1945.)

Now Trump is throwing blows against NAFTA, threatening the life of the trade agreement long denounced by the Left. Obama vowed to "re-negotiate" NAFTA too, and it became one of his dozens of unfulfilled promises. If Trump tackles NAFTA he could win the next election by a landslide.

This is why the Left needs greater clarity on trade: it's been weaponized by the fascists while the Left stutters in response. When Trump smashes the TPP and undermines NAFTA, he's doing so from a U.S. corporate perspective; he wants to renegotiate to get a "better deal" for U.S. companies, workers be damned.

Since Mussolini's Italy, a cornerstone of fascist economics has been trade protectionism (erecting trade barriers instead of free trade,) which serves to fool the people while serving a section of corporations that benefit from trade wars with foreign corporations.

The opposite of free trade is protectionism: neither serve working people but both serve certain sections of capitalists. Corporations who compete well on the global market are fanatical free traders, but those capitalists that do badly overseas are fanatically anti-free trade, demanding "protection" from foreign competitors (like Chinese corporations) with government-imposed trade barriers.

It's these anti-free trade capitalists who supported Trump's campaign, and it's this section of capitalists who've historically invested in fascist movements, a dynamic explained in Daniel Guerin's classic work, *Fascism and Big Business*.

Capitalists undermine free trade in order to use "beggar thy neighbor" trade policies that give them an advantage at the expense of their corporate rivals, ultimately causing trade wars. The fascist architect, Steve Bannon, is the biggest proponent of a trade war against China. In a recent interview he said:

"The economic war with China is everything. And we have to be maniacally focused on that... We're going to run the tables on these guys. We've come to the conclusion that they're in an economic war and they're crushing us."

The journalist who interviewed Bannon explained that, "... his strategy is to battle the trade doves (free traders) inside the administration while building an outside coalition of trade hawks (protectionists) that includes left as well as right."

Bannon is able to recruit "left trade hawks" because the Left has miseducated its base about trade, allowing Trump to fool millions of people that he was the "radical" alternative to the establishment's free-trade policies.

Revolutionary fascism?

Fascist movements have historically fronted as a "revolutionary" ideology that use "anti-capitalist" rhetoric. They aim to be the "real" radicals and pose as more anti-establishment than other Left groups, who they accuse of being part of the *status-quo*.

It's in this context that the "alt right" has exploited a weakness in the mostly-academic infighting around identity politics among the Left, where one side minimizes the importance of race/identity in politics while the other side minimizes class economic factors.

Leftists have traditionally acknowledged that race and class are inseparable under U.S. capitalism, yet the ongoing

debates on the subject seek separation: in order to make their points both sides exaggerate their better arguments while minimizing that of their opponents, in a seemingly endless cycle of academic hair-splitting. Such debates are decades old among the Left, even though the current debate includes important ideas regarding race and identity.

However, both sides have unintentionally opened the doors of academia to the fascists, who've capitalized on various aspects of the conflict, just as they've done over free trade. If Leftists minimize race/identity in favor of class, the fascists are given room to enter these political spaces with their "economic nationalism" platform, in ways that can feel indistinguishable from the Left. If marginalized communities don't see their specific issues reflected in coalitions they'll be less likely to join, and any anti-fascist coalition will not reach the critical mass it needs to be effective.

...fascism is a mass movement that emerges in times of economic crisis, funded by a section of goal-oriented capitalists.

The opposite mistake is ignoring economic factors and over-relying on race/identity, which allows the fascists to pose as the champions of working class interests by offering economic solutions the Left ignores.

Steven Bannon's recent interview comments are, again, a useful example:

"The longer they talk about identity politics, I got 'em. I want them to talk about racism every day. If the left is focused on race and identity, and we go with economic nationalism, we can crush the Democrats."

If you look beyond Bannon's obvious racism you'll notice he's exploiting a deeper truth: a broader section of the population is drifting towards fascism because Bannon is pretending to address people's material needs, while sections of the Left appear to only want to "talk" about race while actually not fighting for demands that disproportionately affect marginalized groups.

People of color, the disabled, women and other ethnic/religious minorities have specific, desperate needs around improved healthcare, education, housing, wages, transportation and more.

Meanwhile Bannon wants the Far Right to fight for "jobs" in high unemployment areas with false solutions such as trade protectionism and private sector infrastructure programs. If the Left abandons the fight for jobs—and other economic issues—the fascists are allowed to seize the initiative.

A *New York Times* op-ed recognized the danger in Bannon's approach, in an article entitled "What if Steve Bannon is Right?"

"...there are many more voters in Trump's camp who still consider themselves Democrats. Some live in the much-discussed zone of despair, places where opportunities for people without a college degree are few, and the opioid epidemic rages. These folks are persuadable, if the message is economic hope..."

The Left can preempt Bannon's white nationalism if it wins real victories in the arena of economic exploitation while simultaneously fighting for racial equity.

For example, fighting against housing discrimination shouldn't be separated from the fight for rent control and against evictions; the fight for a \$15 minimum wage and jobs is aided by demands against employment discrimination; the fight against education discrimination is helped by demanding full funded public education.

Martin Luther King Jr. cut to the essence of the class issues connected

to the struggle for racial justice when he said:

“What good is having the right to sit at a lunch counter if you can’t afford to buy a hamburger?”

Centering on the needs of those most marginalized means inspiring people to action; to fight over demands they desperately need fulfilled is the first step in creating a militant, revolutionary movement.

Rafael Diaz discussed some of the mechanics of building a multiracial-identity movement in a recent article:

“Taking power is no easy task, and we need to be doing all we can to dive into deep and trusting organizing relationships with diverse groups of people who all have reasons for showing up. It’s necessary that we get a sense of clarity in our collective self-interest in toppling a system that exploits us all through class and racial inequality... We can organize our workplaces and communities to collectively build institutional structures and political organizations to fight for issues that couple class struggle and racial liberation. Policies such as universal healthcare, prison abolition and tuition-free higher education would improve lives and severely lessen racial and economic inequity.”

Ultimately people of every identity are themselves divided by class, where upper-income people are typically more politically conservative. Knowing this, the Democratic Party establishment borrows safely from an identity politics detached from economic exploitation. And seeing this, Bannon’s white supremacists talk increasingly about how “The Left is in bed with the establishment.” A diverse Left movement that challenges corporate power cannot be co-opted by the Democrats, and is a critical ingredient in defeating the fascist movement in its infancy.

Lastly, the danger in detaching economic exploitation from identity politics is allowing the fascists to co-opt

language from the Left. If the broader population isn’t trained to understand their circumstances in terms of economic exploitation, the fascists’ talking points become more compelling: “white identity” and “white pride” connect on a deeper level if “discrimination” is the only frame of reference people have to understand oppression, when in reality it’s mostly-white ruling class people responsible for the suffering of poorer “white” people.

The ruling class chooses fascism when it cannot grapple with the social crisis caused by pro-capitalist policies.

The left’s fatal flaw: misidentifying fascism

Every racist is not a fascist. Nor can fascism be defined by a checklist of beliefs or government policies. In reality fascism is a mass movement that emerges in times of economic crisis, funded by a section of goal-oriented capitalists.

The ruling class chooses fascism when it cannot grapple with the social crisis caused by pro-capitalist policies. Mass unemployment, healthcare, the housing crisis, and other basic needs undermine the institutions of the *status-quo*. The pro-capitalist political parties lose legitimacy and find it increasingly difficult to maintain power, especially as they double-down on specific capitalist policies (neoliberalism) to keep corporations profitable.

Leon Trotsky explains the political-economic conditions that give rise to fascism in the classic work *What is Fascism and How to Fight It*:

“If the economy remains in the hands of a small number of capitalists, there is no way out for society. It is condemned to go from crisis to

crisis, from need to misery, from bad to worse. In the various countries, the decrepitude and disintegration of capitalism are expressed in diverse forms and at unequal rhythms. But the basic features of the process are the same everywhere. The bourgeoisie is leading its society to complete bankruptcy. It is capable of assuring the people neither bread nor peace.”

When capitalism enters a crisis, corporations demand concessions: cuts in public spending, privatization of public resources, deregulation, lowering of wages and benefits, reducing health-care and welfare and raising the age of retirement. All policies that serve to bolster profits.

To achieve these goals the ruling class must remove the social barriers to implementation. The main barriers are always the same: representative democracy and the organizations of the working class: labor unions, socialist/anarchist organizations and other working-class based community groups.

Trotsky summed up the ultimate goal of fascism:

“The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery.”

This is why in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy the first people thrown into concentration camps were not the Jews, but leaders of revolutionary organizations and trade unions. This sequential repression was made famous in a poem by the German pastor Martin Niemöller:

“First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Socialist.

“Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

“Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Jew.

“Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”



The only antidote to fascism

Anti-fascist counter-protests are a key ingredient to beating fascism, but they are usually reactive, whereas the fascists are being proactive. It's usually stronger to be “for something” than to simply be against it. Hitler explained in *Mein Kampf* that by taking the initiative the Nazi Party recruited people who wanted action; people who were tired of talk and wanted solutions.

This isn't to minimize the recent mobilizations in Charlottesville, Boston and in San Francisco, which built strong connections between communities acting in self-defense. But in sports as in politics, the best defense is a good offense. Anti-fascist coalitions can also protect their communities by organizing for political demands, which take the air out of the fascists' sails.

But in sports as in politics, the best defense is a good offense. Anti-fascist coalitions can also protect their communities by organizing for political demands, which take the air out of the fascists' sails.

Ultimately the deepening economic-political crisis will continually re-pose a basic question to society that will be answered by either the Left or the Far Right: What are the economic-political solutions to the deepening

crisis? Without a diverse, inspiring and independent movement of the Left, the Far Right will be given opportunity to use the twin strategies of racist scapegoating and economic nationalism.

For now the Left has the upper hand, as shown by the mass demonstrations after Trump was elected and the recent anti-fascist mobilizations. There is still plenty of time for the Left to out-organize the fascists and give a revolutionary answer to the crisis of capitalism.

The wind is at our backs but the window is shrinking. Once the current stock market boom goes bust, history will accelerate again, shrinking the timeline in which the Left must prove itself capable of leading the broader community out of the crisis. Increasingly frequent natural disasters also serve to fast forward history.

In his above-mentioned essay Trotsky notes: “Fascism comes only when the working class shows complete incapacity to take into its own hands the fate of society.”

Funneling the current political energy into a bold politics will cut fascism off at the kneecaps.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action (www.workerscompass.org).

—CounterPunch, September 4, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/09/04/protest-alone-wont-stop-fascism/>



How You Can Organize for Socialism Today

To be a socialist, you need to be part of an organization that advances socialist ideas.

BY DORIAN B. AND DANNY KATCH

Socialist Viewpoint *has been running articles from various socialist organizations. This one on “How You Can Organize for Socialism Today” is from Socialist Worker.org, the website of the International Socialist Organization (ISO.)*

If you're a regular reader of *SocialistWorker.org*, you're probably pretty receptive to the idea that the society we live in today—the society of capitalism—is a crisis-ridden, miserable train wreck. Likewise, the notion that we need an alternative society where all people decide together how to address all of our wants and needs may strike you as sound logic.

Say you agree with these premises. Great, you're ready to call yourself a socialist.

So what now? What, concretely, can we do to fight for a socialist world? What would the path toward this goal—and the goal itself, for that matter—really look like?

The first point to make is that it's impossible to move toward a socialist world in which everyone works for the common good without confronting the depressing fact that, as of now, a minority ruling class has the power to block progress toward such a goal.

According to a study by political science professors Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page:

“Americans do enjoy many features central to democratic governance, such as regular elections, freedom of speech and association, and a widespread (if still contested) franchise. But we believe that if policymaking is dominated by powerful business organizations and a small number of affluent Americans, then America's claims to being a democratic society are seriously threatened.”

Gilens and Page document how an elite group of big business executives

and owners, along with top political leaders, control “policymaking” and a lot more about society. And this elite—to put it mildly—isn't all that concerned with the common good. Their primary object is to defend and extend their own interests.

This has always been true about the One Percent of capitalist society, but now that Donald Trump is in power, the greed and hatred of their society has become even more blatant and threatening.

Being a socialist is about organizing to stand up to the many daily injustices of capitalism—fighting for universal healthcare, abortion rights and an end to deportations, for example. But it also entails providing a vision for a different way that society can and must be arranged—and winning more people to the idea it that can only come about with a different class in power.

The working class has the potential to lead the struggle for a different kind of society, firstly because it is the vast majority of society—it is comprised of the many millions of people who have to work for a paycheck to survive, rather than owning or controlling the businesses and services that employ labor.

Socialists also look to the working class because it has tremendous potential power because it produces almost all of the wealth in society—and it can realize that power because of the way capitalism organizes us to work collectively. As the union song “Solidarity Forever” puts it:

“They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn, But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn, We can break their haughty power gain our freedom when we learn, That the union makes us strong”

Most workers don't think of themselves as being part of a class with collective social power. They feel isolated and in competition with other workers—and sometimes even see them as their enemies because of their skin color, religion, national origin and so on.

How can workers gain freedom inside a system that works so hard to keep us divided and oppressed?

The success of Bernie Sanders in the U.S. and Jeremy Corbyn in Britain in elections and primaries that they lost only very narrowly has provided amazing inspiration to a new generation—and put radical demands for economic equality and even socialism back on the agenda.

But while socialists should engage with this mood—both in elections and protests—we have to maintain a clear understanding: Socialism won't be brought about through elections inside of capitalism.

More generally, any strategy of grouping together socialist activists and politicians, taking hold of the institutions of government and society—by winning elections or any other means—and then implementing socialism from those new positions is a dead end.

The institutions of government were designed to uphold capitalism—to help a small minority control the large majority. Those who try to use such institutions to defy the system will crash headfirst into innumerable and insurmountable obstacles.

Plenty of movements have tried this route before. The Social Democrats in Germany in the early 20th century, Salvador Allende's Popular Front in Chile, and the radical left party SYRIZA in contemporary Greece all, in their various ways, tried to carry out such a project, and all were defeated.

Other so-called socialist formations—like the regimes presided over by Joseph Stalin in Russia and Mao Zedong in China—had full control of the state and the economy, and claimed to operate in the interests of workers. But they proved to be just as repressive and authoritarian—and directed toward advancing the power of a small minority—as the capitalist system we are fighting against in our own time.

To really move toward socialism requires an approach of a profoundly different kind. The working class has to build entirely new institutions of government, controlled by and comprised of all workers democratically, rather than a faction of the class or a group of socialists trying to take over the existing state structure.

Working-class people have to organize themselves in workplaces, campuses and communities everywhere, bringing those organizations together into

one unified body, and sweep aside the old state to install this new body as the next form of government.

Compared to the idea of socialists entering the government, this more sweeping conception of socialism from below seems like it involves enormous challenges. And, truth be told, it does.

But while we should never minimize the challenges, we also shouldn't forget the many moments in history when workers showed themselves capable of organizing on the scale needed for socialism.

At different times during the 20th century, workers in the U.S. organized general strikes in dozens of cities; factory occupations that swept across the country and established union rights; and radical labor and social movements that posed a serious threat to the bosses' power. All this was before the decades of working-class defeats that most of us have grown up in since the late 1970s and 1980s.

In other countries, workers have come even closer to revolution. In France in 1968, Chile in 1973, Iran in 1979 and Poland in 1981, millions of people organized themselves into councils and committees that contained the potential to challenge for power, though all of these were ultimately beaten back.

During the Russian Revolution of 1917, the self-organized councils of the working class actually did come to power and replace the existing state with its own decision-making bodies, providing an inspiring example of direct democracy in action. The crushing of their movement during the Russian civil war and the counterrevolution led by Stalin and his henchmen is one of history's greatest tragedies.

All of these experiences have to be studied with fresh eyes by today's activists to cull the many lessons they have for us.

Many of you moving toward socialist politics will likely be intrigued, but still

skeptical about this vision of socialism from below. That's understandable, and there are branches of the International Socialist Organization (ISO)—the publisher of this website—all around the country where you can bring your questions and differences to discuss with other socialists.

Let's say you're on board with the project of working-class revolution. Clearly this is a long-term project, with the goal of the socialism well in the future. But how do we advance that struggle forward today?

The ISO views itself as having three broad tasks.

First, we want to organize the largest possible struggles for democracy, social justice and economic equality, and defend our freedoms from government attacks and right-wing creeps. This means being involved in movements and organizing in many corners of society, from workplaces to campuses to communities, to achieve gains and defend previous victories that improve the situation of the whole working class.

Second, we want to persuade as many people as possible within these struggles and beyond to the importance of the project of revolutionary socialism. We need to build organizations of socialists capable of education, discussion and action, and the networks and ideas of the broader left that socialists are part of.

Third, the ISO wants to develop all these socialists, in our own organization and in the broader left, into more experienced and effective activists and intellectual leaders, who can be leaders among their co-workers and in their communities in putting forward socialist strategies in the struggles of today and a socialist vision of a different society.

These activities need one another to be successful. We can't build the capacity of our fellow workers and students to fight back without also building socialist organization, and we can't build socialist organization without

SOCIALISM



**SPREADING THE
WEALTH SINCE 1917**

continuously engaging in the struggle to organize our workplaces, campuses and communities.

None of these tasks happen in a vacuum either, but in response to events in the world and the ups and downs of the movements that impact all of us.

If a war breaks out or far-right racists decide to target our city, if one of us finds ourselves in a union drive or facing deportation, we need organization to discuss and debate our priorities and strategies, and later assess what happened and why.

Equally important to discussing our organizing is the work of analyzing and explaining the world around us. Without an accurate explanation of the reality we have to confront, we won't find the right course of action for our side. Often, the most important step in understanding the present is understanding the past experience of socialists and other radicals, which is why the ISO places a great stress on education.

This is the week-to-week work of being a socialist that hopefully can ground emerging movements in consistent, purposeful activity and lay the foundations for greater struggles in the years to come.

If you feel even partially swayed by these arguments, please attend an ISO meeting and talk to ISO organizers about any and all of the questions you can think of. If you find yourself more fully persuaded, join us.

The situation of the world today is dire, but there is a massive yearning for something better. We have a world to win.

—*Socialist Worker*, August 29, 2017

<https://socialistworker.org/2017/08/29/how-you-can-organize-for-socialism-today>

Winning Universal Healthcare

BY ANTONIO BALMER

Though reform of the U.S. healthcare system is now considered common sense, the Democrats cannot and will not deliver. Only a mass independent political force—with single-payer placed at the top of its agenda—is capable of winning this fight.

“A political struggle is in its essence a struggle of interests and forces, not of arguments.”—Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*

Firing the opening shot in his new offensive in the battle for single-payer healthcare, Bernie Sanders presented his open-and-shut case in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece:

“Do we, as a nation, join the rest of the industrialized world and guarantee comprehensive healthcare to every person as a human right? Or do we maintain a system that is enormously expensive, wasteful and bureaucratic, and is designed to maximize profits for big insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, Wall Street and medical equipment suppliers?”

Although every sector of the capitalist economy without exception can be described as “enormously expensive, wasteful and bureaucratic, and designed to maximize profits for big [companies and] Wall Street,” the U.S. healthcare crisis is unrivalled in its glaring absurdity as an expression of capitalism’s historical impasse. With annual revenues of \$3.3 trillion, the healthcare industry accounts for nearly a fifth of U.S. GDP.

Seven years after Obamacare was supposed to have solved the problem, some 30 million people are still without insurance and face financial ruin if their health takes a turn for the worse—over 60 percent of bankruptcies are caused by medical expenses. Over 5.6 million needed medical care in 2016

but had to forego it because they couldn’t afford it. Half of the \$2 billion raised by the crowdsourcing site *GoFundMe* last year went towards efforts to cover people’s healthcare expenses. One study estimated that 45,000 deaths each year, or 123 per day, are the direct result of lack of coverage.

The single-payer movement’s fierce and energetic base of committed activists is driven in no small part by the horrific reality that people are losing their lives every day—not because of the limits of medical science or technique—but because it would reduce or eliminate the profits of health insurance companies to save their lives.

Battle lines being drawn

It therefore comes as no surprise that the life-or-death battle for universal healthcare is working its way to the forefront of the class struggle in the U.S., as a majority of Americans are warming up to the once radical-seeming idea of liquidating the private health insurance market in favor of centralizing and streamlining the function of guaranteeing healthcare coverage under the control of the state.

A June poll by *Pew Research* found that 60 percent of Americans—and 67 percent of those under 30—feel the federal government should be “responsible for ensuring universal health care coverage.” A more precisely worded poll by Kaiser Health Tracking conducted in the same month found that 53 percent—including even 24 percent of Republicans!—favor a national health plan in which all Americans would get their insurance from a single government plan.

Meanwhile, the grassroots forces on the ground pushing for single-payer have gathered steam, growing to hundreds of organizations with member-

ship in the millions, joined most recently by the Democratic Socialists of America's robust network of activists spanning all corners of the country. Following a decision to prioritize the battle for single payer at its Chicago convention this summer, DSA's commitment to deploy its energetic door-knocking, phone-banking, and canvassing foot soldiers opens the potential to step up this fight even further.

Perhaps more importantly, it also means that socialists, union members, and activists across the country are actively discussing, strategizing, and debating the route to single-payer victory—the tasks before us, and the obstacles that stand in the way.

As revolutionary socialists we are fighting for healthcare for all, not health insurance for all. Most Americans are not yet clear on the significant difference between these two proposals, and most single-payer campaigns are not explicit about it either.

So let us be clear: We fight for a single-payer system in which the insurance industry is abolished, the healthcare provision sector is nationalized, and the state pays for and provides universal healthcare, not a single-payer system in which the state merely pays for—*i.e.*, subsidizes—private health providers.

What will it take?

Socialists have a critical role to play in providing the movement for single-payer with the unwavering backbone that only the outlook of class struggle can provide. Never mind the fact-sheets and talking points: it is the most basic capitalist class interests—not a deficiency of persuasive data—that has stood in the way of implementing what millions now consider a no-brainer reform.

To begin with, we are faced with the task of prying a highly profitable, multi-trillion-dollar market from the grip of the capitalist class. In the rest of the “industrialized world”—which Sanders invites the U.S. to join—it was

not through the gracious civility of the capitalists that reform was granted, nor through the initiative of liberal capitalist parties. It was a hard-won concession forced on the capitalists with the threat of revolution, achieved through massive mobilization and old-fashioned class struggle, led by labor and the socialist and communist parties of the working class.

But unlike the major bankrupt industries that were nationalized in postwar Britain at the time the National Health Service was set up, U.S. health insurance is a booming industry which just last year increased its income by 46 percent, netting \$13.1 billion in pure profit. Not only is the health insurance industry parasitically enmeshed throughout the broader healthcare sector, its tentacles are also intertwined with the nerves and tissues of the Democratic Party, which received over \$15 million in “donations” from the insurance industry last year.

Faced with such a serious battle, the leading voices of the single-payer movement could do no greater disservice than to lull their troops into a false anticipation of an easy legislative victory. Removing this parasite will require, not so much a delicate surgery, but a battle to the death against a monstrous hydra and the entrenched political forces it controls.

Single-payer is by no means beyond reach—on the contrary—this demand clearly has the potential to become a galvanizing force for the labor movement. But the political path to victory is not through the Democratic Party, which serves at the pleasure of the markets, but in the creation of a mass socialist party of the working class, which, not coincidentally, is another common denominator in the rest of the so-called “industrialized world.”

A litmus test?

Even if the entire Democratic Party were to come on board, it's no secret that

Bernie's Medicare For All bill has no chance of passing this Congress, controlled as it is by a Republican majority. Sanders has acknowledged as much, saying that the point of the bill is to “force a conversation.” This fact should figure into our strategic considerations. Spotting a golden opportunity to win “progressive” points without threatening their generous friends in the insurance industry, over half of House Democrats and 16 in the Senate have been more than happy to join Bernie's “conversation”—several of them with an eye on the 2020 presidential primaries.

Some have argued that this indicates a growing momentum of the “progressive wing” of the party and that, if supporting single-payer is upheld as a “litmus test” for progressive candidates, the Democrats really can be pushed to the left. However, to fall into this trap would be more than a disastrous waste of time, energy, and momentum—it would effectively derail and disorient the movement, as was shown this summer in California.

Originally drafted and championed by the California Nurses Association, the Healthy California Act was a legislative bill for a statewide single-payer system that had previously made it through the state legislature twice, only to be vetoed by Republican Governor Schwarzenegger. When the Democrats captured California's House, Senate, and governorship, single-payer activists were confident that they had it in the bag.

A massive campaign involving 350 community and labor organizations and millions of volunteers mobilized support for the initiative across a state in which 70 percent of the population supports single-payer. Three weeks after it passed the state Senate, the bill was killed by the leader of the State Assembly, Democrat Anthony Rendon, arguing that the funding provisions were not clear.

Leaving aside the fact that Rendon himself received \$150,000 from insur-

ance and pharmaceutical companies, the episode is a clear example of the party's priorities. When they had full control of the U.S. Congress in 2009, it was Democrats—not Republicans—that blocked every attempt by Sanders, who should know better by now, to push Obamacare to the left by introducing language to expand Medicare or to allow the government to negotiate drug prices. We must learn the lessons of history or be forever condemned to defeat!

Who will pay?

The near-miss in California also foreshadows the maneuvers that Democrats will inevitably execute against any single-payer legislation that comes within range of success: present the funding issue as proof of a poorly thought out initiative, or resort to dubious inflated figures to argue its infeasibility. In doing so, they are merely regurgitating the talking points of the insurance lobby: it is unaffordable, it will cost trillions, savings on health costs will be cancelled out by increased taxation, *etc.*

These obstacles can only be swept aside by socialist arguments and a class-based program. If the capitalist politicians argue that something as basic as universal healthcare is not feasible within the limits of the system in the richest country on earth, we'll be there to take those arguments to their revolutionary conclusion—by pointing out that capitalism is the root of the problem. Since the Democrats are in bed with the health insurance hydra, our task is to put all our strength towards the creation of a genuine mass political vehicle for our class—one that will allow us, by degrees, to wrest all capital from the capitalists, starting with the health insurance companies.

Does this mean postponing the fight for universal healthcare until we've built a new party? Not at all! It means arming ourselves to conduct this fight

all the more consistently and implacably without political concessions or compromises, while soberly preparing for the challenges that lie ahead.

Neither the founding of a mass socialist party nor the abolition of the insurance sector and the nationalization of healthcare providers will be walks in the park. But socialists specialize in preparing for the future and altering the course of history, not bemoaning the immensity of the task, or settling for what we are told is "practical." Besides, along with favoring single-payer, a record 61 percent of Americans now say they want a third major party, and socialists are in a perfect position to tie these strings together!

Given the discontent in society, a mass independent political force would spread like wildfire throughout the country once it emerges and establishes its viability. The demand for single-payer could be placed at the top of the agenda—complete with crystal-clear funding provisions.

The combined assets of the life and health insurance industries amount to nearly one-third of U.S. GDP at a staggering \$6.8 trillion.

By seizing the assets of these parasitic profiteers, without compensation, as well as nationalizing and integrating all the insurance, medical equipment, and pharmaceutical companies, along with the hospital networks and clinics, into a single democratically administered health provider, not only would the cost of care be dramatically reduced, it would also be drastically simplified. A socialized national healthcare system would dispense with the monstrous bureaucracy and waste that doesn't cover everyone and still costs 83 percent more *per capita* than the Canadian universal system, and double the cost of the British NHS.

In his appeal, Sanders elaborated further:

"We remain the only major country on earth that allows chief execu-

tives and stockholders in the health-care industry to get incredibly rich, while tens-of-millions of people suffer because they can't get the health-care they need. This is not what the United States should be about."

But as any socialist will point out, this is precisely what U.S. and every other capitalism is about. That's the problem. It is precisely the irresistible logic of taking the fight for universal healthcare to the end that makes this seemingly "common sense" reform such a threat to the capitalists.

If it is acknowledged that it makes no sense for a small minority to profit off the health and sickness of millions when the resources exist to provide treatment and care to all, what other conclusions will people begin to draw about this society? Why allow a small minority of chief executives and stockholders enrich themselves at the expense of our access to education? Why allow real estate magnates to speculate on the housing market while 11 million workers are forced to spend half of their income or more to cover rent? Why should food production be organized according to the profit motive while there are people starving and undernourished?

The idea that we need a democratic plan for the entire economy could become very popular very quickly—because it's an idea whose time has come. If socialists can bring a revolutionary socialist program into the multi-million ranks of single-payer activism, a genuine victory on this front and many others will be within reach, not only for U.S. workers but for the workers of the entire world.

—*In Defense of Marxism*, October 24, 2017

<https://www.marxist.com/usa-how-single-payer-will-be-achieved.htm>

Trump-Goldman Sachs Tax Cut for the Rich

BY JACK RASMUS

October 4, 2017—This past week Trump introduced his long awaited Tax Cut, estimated between \$2.0 to \$2.4 trillion. Like so many other distortions of the truth, Trump claimed his plan would benefit the middle class, not the rich—the latest in a long litany of lies by this president.

Contradicting Trump, the independent Tax Policy Center has estimated in just the first year half of the \$2 trillion plus Trump cuts will go to the wealthiest one percent households that annually earn more than \$730,000. That's an immediate income windfall to the wealthiest one percent households of 8.5 percent, according to the Tax Policy Center. But that's only in the first of ten years the cuts will be in effect. It gets worse over time.

According to the Tax Policy Center, "Taxpayers in the top one percent (incomes above \$730,000,) would receive about 50 percent of the total tax benefit [in 2018]." However, "By 2027, the top one percent would get 80 percent of the plan's tax cuts while the share for middle-income households would drop to about five percent." By the last year of the cuts, 2027, on average the wealthiest one percent household would realize \$207,000, and the even wealthier 0.1 percent would realize an income gain of \$1,022,000.

When confronted with these facts on national TV this past Sunday, Trump's Treasury Secretary, Steve Mnuchin, quickly backtracked and admitted he could not guarantee every middle class family would see a tax cut. Right. That's because 15-17 million (12 percent) of U.S. taxpaying households in the U.S. will face a tax hike in the first year of the cuts. In the tenth and last year, "one-in-four middle class families would end up with higher taxes."

The U.S. economic "Troika"

The Trump Plan is actually the product of the former Goldman-Sachs investment bankers who have been in charge of Trump's economic policy since he came into office. Steve Mnuchin, the Treasury Secretary, and Gary Cohn, director of Trump's economic council, are the two authors of the Trump tax cuts. They put it together. They are also both former top executives of the global shadow bank called Goldman Sachs. Together with the other key office determining U.S. economic policy, the U.S. central bank, held by yet another ex-Goldman Sachs senior exec, Bill Dudley, president of the New York Federal Reserve bank, the Goldman-Sachs trio of Mnuchin-Cohn-Dudley constitute what might be called the "U.S. Troika" for domestic economic policy.

The Trump tax proposal is therefore really a big bankers tax plan—authored by bankers, in the interest of bankers and financial investors (like Trump himself), and overwhelmingly favoring the wealthiest one percent.

Given that economic policy under Trump is being driven by bankers, it's not surprising that the CEO of the biggest U.S. bank, Morgan Stanley, admitted just a few months ago that a reduction of the corporate nominal income tax rate from the current 35 percent nominal rate to a new nominal rate of 20 percent will provide the bank an immediate windfall gain of 15 percent-20 percent in earnings. And that's just the nominal corporate rate cut proposed by Trump. With loopholes, it's no doubt more.

The Trump-Troika's tax-cut Trifecta for the one percent

The Trump Troika has indicated it hopes to package up and deliver the

trillions of dollars to their one percent friends by Christmas 2017. Their gift will consist of three major tax cuts for the rich and their businesses. A Trump-Troika Tax Cut "Trifecta" of trillions of dollars.

1. The Corporate Tax Cuts

The first of the three main elements is a big cut in the corporate income tax nominal rate, from current 35 percent to 20 percent. In addition, there's the elimination of what is called the "territorial tax" system, which is just a fancy phrase for ending the fiction of the foreign profits tax. Currently, U.S. multinational corporations hoard a minimum of \$2.6 trillion of profits offshore and refuse to pay U.S. taxes on those profits. In other words, Congress and presidents for decades have refused to enforce the foreign profits tax. Now that fiction will be ended by officially eliminating taxes on their profits. They'll only pay taxes on U.S. profits, which will create an even greater incentive for them to shift operations and profits to their offshore subsidiaries. But there's more for the big corporations.

The Trump plan also simultaneously proposes what it calls a "repatriation tax cut." If the big tech, pharma, banks, and energy companies bring back some of their reported \$2.6 trillion (an official number which is actually more than that,) Congress will require they pay only a ten percent tax rate—not the current 35 percent rate or even Trump's proposed 20 percent—on that repatriated profit. No doubt the repatriation will be tied to some kind of agreement to invest the money in the U.S. economy. That's how they'll sell it to the American public. But that shell game was played before, in 2004-05, under George W. Bush. The same "repatriation" deal was then legislated, to return the \$700 bil-

lion then stuffed away in corporate offshore subsidiaries. About half the \$700 billion was brought back, but U.S. corporations did not invest it in jobs in the U.S. as they were supposed to. They used the repatriated profits to buy up their competitors (mergers and acquisitions), to pay out dividends to stockholders, and to buy back their stock to drive equity prices and the stock market to new heights in 2005-07. The current Trump “territorial tax repeal/repatriation” boondoggle will turn out just the same as it did in 2005.

2. Non-incorporate business tax cuts

The second big business class tax windfall in the Trump-Goldman Sachs tax giveaway for the rich is the proposal to reduce the top nominal tax rate for non-corporate businesses, like proprietorships and partnerships, whose business income (*aka* profits) is treated like personal income. This is called the “pass through business income” provision.

That’s a Trump tax cut for unincorporated businesses—like doctors, law firms, real estate investment partnerships, *etc.* Forty percent of non-corporate income is currently taxed at 39.6 percent (the top personal income tax rate.) Trump proposes to reduce that nominal rate to 25 percent. So non-incorporate businesses too will get an immediate 14.6 percent cut, nearly matching the 15 percent rate cut for corporate businesses.

In the case of both corporate and non-corporate companies we’re talking about “nominal” tax rate cuts of 14.6 percent and 15 percent. The “effective” tax rate is what they actually pay in taxes—*i.e.*, after loopholes, after their high paid tax lawyers take a whack at their tax bill, after they cleverly divert their income to their offshore subsidiaries and refuse to pay the foreign profits tax, and after they stuff away whatever they can in offshore tax havens in Switzerland, the Cayman

Islands, and a dozen other island nations worldwide.

For example, Apple Corporation alone is hoarding \$260 billion in cash at present—95 percent of which it keeps offshore to avoid paying Uncle Sam taxes. Big multinational companies like Apple, virtually all the big tech companies, big Pharma corporations, banks and oil companies, pay no more than 12-13 percent effective tax rates today—not the 35 percent nominal rate.

Tech, big Pharma, banks and oil companies are the big violators of offshore cash hoarding/tax avoidance schemes. Microsoft’s effective global tax rate last year was only 12 percent. IBM’s even less, at ten percent. The giant drug company, Pfizer paid 18 percent and the oil company, Chevron 14 percent. One of the largest U.S. companies in the world, General Electric, paid only one percent. When their nominal rate is reduced to 20 percent under the Trump plan, they’ll pay even less, likely in the single digits, if that.

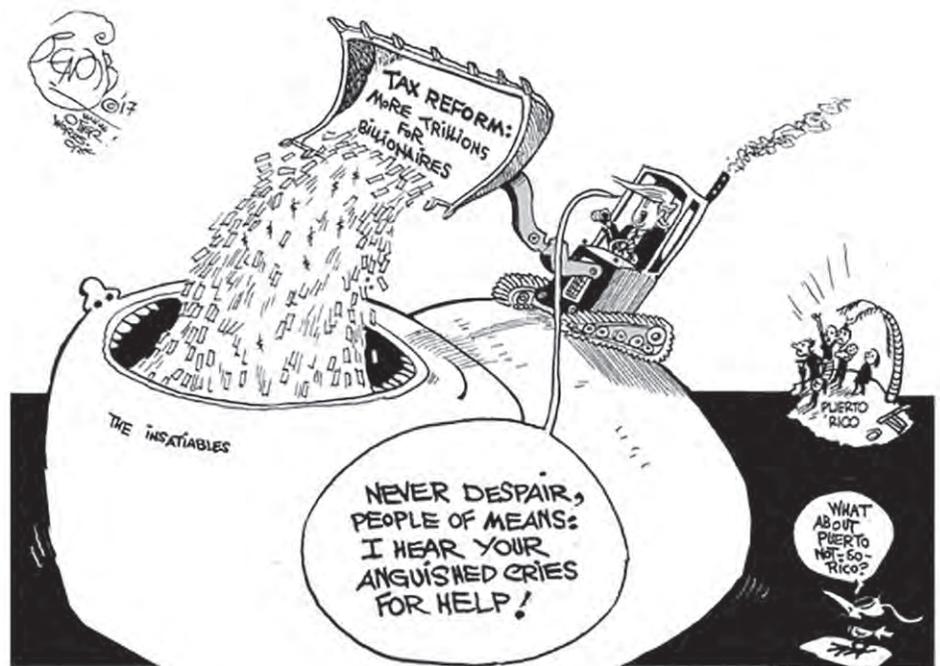
Corporations and non-corporate businesses are the institutional conduit for passing income to their capitalist owners and managers. The Trump cor-

porate and business taxes mean companies immediately get to keep at least 15 percent more of their income for themselves—and more in “effective” rate terms. That means they get to distribute to their executives and big stockholders and partners even more than they have in recent years. And in recent years that has been no small sum. For example, just corporate dividend payouts and stock buybacks have totaled more than \$1 trillion on average for six years since 2010! A total of more than \$6 trillion.

But all that’s only the business tax cut side of the Trump plan. There’s a third major tax cut component of the Trump plan—major cuts in the Personal Income Tax that accrue overwhelmingly to the richest one percent households.

3. Personal income tax cuts for the one percent

There are multiple measures in the Trump-Troika proposal that benefit the one percent in the form of personal income tax reductions. Corporations and businesses get to keep more income from the business tax cuts, to pass on to their shareholders, investors, and



senior managers. The latter then get to keep more of what's passed through and distributed to them as a result of the personal income tax cuts.

The first personal tax cut boondoggle for the one percent wealthiest households is the Trump proposal to reduce the "tax income brackets" from seven to three. The new brackets would be 35 percent, 25 percent, and 12 percent.

Whenever brackets are reduced, the wealthiest always benefit. The current top bracket, affecting households with a minimum of \$418,000 annual income, would be reduced from the current 39.6 percent to 35 percent. In the next bracket, those with incomes of 191,000 to 418,000 would see their tax rate (nominal again) cut from 28 percent to 25 percent. However, the 25 percent third bracket would apply to annual incomes as low as \$38,000. That's the middle and working class. So households with \$38,000 annual incomes would pay the same rate as those with more than \$400,000. Tax cuts for the middle class, did Trump say? Only tax rate reductions beginning with those with \$191,000 incomes and the real cuts for those over \$418,000!

But the cuts in the nominal tax rate for the top one percent to five percent households are only part of the personal income tax windfall for the rich under the Trump plan. The really big tax cuts for the one percent come in the form of the repeal of the Inheritance Tax and the Alternative Minimum Tax, as well as Trump's allowing the "carried interest" tax loophole for financial speculators like hedge fund managers and private equity CEOs to continue.

The current Inheritance Tax applies only to those with estates of \$11 million or more, about 0.2 of all the tax-paying households. So its repeal is clearly a windfall for the super rich. The Alternative Minimum Tax is designed to ensure the super rich pay something, after they manipulate the tax loopholes, shelter their income off-

shore in tax havens, or simply engage in tax fraud by various other means. Now that's gone as well under the Trump plan. "Carried interest," a loophole, allows big finance speculators, like hedge fund managers, to avoid paying the corporate tax rate altogether, and pay a maximum of 20 percent on their hundreds-of-millions and sometimes billions-of-dollars of income every year.

**...households with
\$38,000 annual incomes
would pay the same rate
as those with more than
\$400,000.**

Who pays?

As previously noted, folks with \$91,000 a year annual income get no tax rate cuts. They still will pay the 25 percent. And since that is what's called "earned" (wage and salary) income, they don't get the loopholes to manipulate, like those with "capital incomes" (dividends, capital gains, rents, interest, *etc.*) What they get is called deductions. But under the Trump plan, the deductions for state and local taxes, for state sales taxes, and apparently for excess medical costs will all disappear. The cost of that to middle and working class households is estimated at \$1 trillion over the decade.

Trump claims the standard deduction will be doubled, and that will benefit the middle class. But estimates reveal that a middle class family with two kids will see their standard deduction reduced from \$28,900 to \$24,000. But I guess that's just "Trump math."

The general U.S. taxpayer will also pay for the trillions-of-dollars that will be redistributed to the one percent and their companies. It's estimated the federal government deficit will increase by \$2.4 trillion over the decade as a result

of the Trump plan. Republicans in Congress have railed over the deficits and federal debt, now at \$20 trillion, for years. But they are conspicuously quiet now about adding \$2.4 trillion more—so long as it the result of tax giveaways to themselves, their one percent friends, and their rich corporate election campaign contributors.

And both wings of the Corporate Party of America—*aka* Republicans and Democrats—never mention the economic fact that since 2001, 60 percent of U.S. federal government deficits, and therefore the U.S. debt of \$20 trillion, are attributable to tax cuts by George W. Bush and Barack Obama: more than \$3.5 trillion under Bush and more than \$7 trillion under Obama. (The remaining \$10 trillion of the U.S. debt due to war and defense spending, price gouging by the medical industry and big pharma driving up government costs for Medicare, Medicaid, and other government insurance, bailouts of the big banks in 2008-09, and interest payments on the debt.)

**The 35-year neoliberal
tax offensive**

Tax cutting for business classes and the one percent has always been a fundamental element of Neoliberal economic policy ever since the Reagan years (and actually late Jimmy Carter period.) Major tax cut legislation occurred in 1981, 1986, and 1997-98 under Clinton. George W. Bush then cut taxes by \$3.4 trillion in 2001-04, 80 percent of which went to the wealthiest households and businesses. He cut taxes another \$180 billion in 2008. Obama cut another \$300 billion in his 2009 so-called recovery program. When that faltered, it was another \$800 billion at year-end 2010. He then extended the Bush tax cuts that were scheduled to expire in 2011 two more years. That costs \$450 billion each year. And in 2013, cutting a deal with Republicans called the "fiscal cliff" settlement; he extended the Bush tax cuts

of the prior decade for another ten years. That cost a further \$5 trillion. Now Trump wants even more. He promised \$5 trillion in tax cuts during his election campaign. So the current proposal is only half of what he has in mind perhaps.

Neoliberal tax cutting in the U.S. has also been characterized by the “tax cut shell game.” The shell game is played several ways.

In the course of major tax cut legislation, the elites and their lobbyists alternate their focus on cutting rates and on correcting tax loopholes. They raise rates but expand loopholes. When the public becomes aware of the outrageous loopholes, they then eliminate some loopholes but simultaneously reduce the tax rates on the rich. When the public complains of too low tax rates for the rich, they raise the rates but quietly expand the loopholes. They play this shell game so the outcome is always a net gain for corporations and the rich.

Since Reagan and the advent of neoliberal tax policy, the corporate income tax share of total U.S. government revenues has fallen from more than 20 percent to single digits well below ten percent. Conversely, the payroll tax has doubled from 22 percent to more than 40 percent. A similar shift within the personal income tax, steadily around 40 percent of government revenues, has also occurred. The wealthy pay less a share of the total and the middle class pays more. Along the way, token concessions to the very low end of working poor are introduced, to give the appearance of fairness. But the middle class—the \$38,000 to \$91,000, nearly 100 million taxpaying households—foot the bill for both the one percent and the bottom. This pattern was set in motion under Reagan. His proposed \$752 billion in tax cuts in 1981-82 were adjusted in 1986, but the net outcome was more for the rich and their corporations. That pattern has continued

under Clinton, Bush, Obama and now proposed under Trump.

To cover the shell game, an overlay of ideology covers up what’s going on. There’s the false argument that “tax cuts create jobs,” for which there’s no empirical evidence. There’s the claim U.S. multinational corporations pay a double tax compared to their competitors, when in fact they effectively pay less. There’s the lie that if corporate taxes are cut they will automatically invest the savings, when in fact what they do is invest offshore, divert the savings to stock and bond and other financial markets, boost their dividend and stock buybacks, or stuff the savings in their offshore subsidiaries to avoid paying taxes.

**But the middle class—
the \$38,000 to \$91,000,
nearly 100 million tax-
paying households—
foot the bill for both
the one percent and the
bottom.**

All these neoliberal false claims, arguments, and outright lies continue today to justify the Trump-Goldman Sachs tax plan—which is just the latest iteration of neoliberal tax policy and tax offensive in the U.S. The consequences of the Trump plan, if it is passed, will be the same as the previous tax giveaways to the one percent and their companies: it will redistribute income massively from

the middle and working classes to the rich. Income inequality will continue to worsen dramatically. U.S. multinational corporations will begin again to divert profits, and investment, offshore; profits brought back untaxed will result in mergers and acquisitions, dividend payouts, and financial markets investment. No real jobs will be created in the U.S. The wealthy will continue to pump their savings into financial asset markets, causing further bubbles in stocks, exchange traded funds, bonds, derivatives and the like. The U.S. economy will continue to slow and become more unstable financially. And there will be another financial crash and great recession—or worse. Only this time, the vast majority of U.S. households—the middle and working classes—will be even worse off and more unable to weather the next economic storm.

Nothing will change so long as the Corporate Party of America is allowed to continue its neoliberal tax giveaways, its tax cutting “shell games,” and is allowed to continue to foment its ideological cover up.

Jack Rasmus is the author of Systemic Fragility in the Global Economy, Clarity Press, 2015.

—CounterPunch, October 4, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/04/the-trump-goldman-sachs-tax-cut-for-the-rich/>



How Billionaires Become Billionaires

BY JAMES PETRAS

America has the greatest inequalities, highest mortality rate, most regressive taxes, and largest public subsidies for bankers and billionaires of any developed capitalist country.

In this essay we will discuss the socioeconomic roots of inequalities and the relation between the concentration of wealth and the downward mobility of the working and salaried classes.

Billionaires

Contrary to the propaganda pushed by the business press, between 67 percent and 72 percent of corporations had zero tax liabilities after credits and exemptions...while their workers and employees paid between 25—30 percent in taxes. The rate for the minority of corporations, which paid any tax, was 14 percent.

According to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, billionaire tax evasion amounts to \$458 billion dollars in lost public revenues every year—almost a trillion dollars every two years by this conservative estimate.

The largest U.S. corporations sheltered over \$2.5 trillion dollars in overseas tax havens where they paid no taxes or single digit tax rates.

Meanwhile U.S. corporations in crisis received over \$14.4 trillion dollars (Bloomberg claimed 12.8 trillion) in public bailout money, split between the U.S. Treasury and the Federal Reserve, mostly from U.S. tax payers, who are overwhelmingly workers, employees and pensioners.

The recipient bankers invested their interest-free or low interest U.S. bailout funds and earned billions in profits, most resulting from mortgage foreclosures of working class households.

Through favorable legal rulings and illegal foreclosures, the bankers evicted

9.3 million families. Over 20 million individuals lost their properties, often due to illegal or fraudulent debts.

A small number of the financial swindlers, including executives from Wall Street's leading banks (Goldman Sachs, J. P. Morgan etc.), paid fines—but no one went to prison for the gargantuan fraud that drove millions of Americans into misery.

Contrary to the propaganda pushed by the business press, between 67 percent and 72 percent of corporations had zero tax liabilities after credits and exemptions...while their workers and employees paid between 25—30 percent in taxes. The rate for the minority of corporations, which paid any tax, was 14 percent.

There are other swindler bankers, like the current Secretary of Treasury Steve Mnuchin, who enriched themselves by illegally foreclosing on thousands of homeowners in California. Some were tried; all were exonerated, thanks to the influence of Democratic political leaders during the Obama years.

Silicon Valley and its innovative billionaires have found novel ways to avoid taxes using overseas tax havens

and domestic tax write-offs. They increase their wealth and corporate profits by paying their local manual and service workers poverty level wages. Silicon Valley executives “earn” a thousand times more than their production workers.

Class inequalities are further reinforced by ethnic divisions. White, Chinese and Indian multi-millionaires exploit African-American, Latin American, Vietnamese and Filipino workers.

Billionaires in the commercial conglomerates, like Walmart, exploit workers by paying poverty wages and providing few, if any, benefits. Walmart earns \$16 billion dollars-a-year in profits by paying its workers between \$10 and \$13-an-hour and relying on state and federal assistance to provide services to the families of its impoverished workers through Medicaid and food stamps. Amazon plutocrat Jeff Bezos exploits workers by paying \$12.50 an hour while he has accumulated over \$80 billion dollars in profits. UPS CEO David Albany takes \$11-million-a-year by exploiting workers at \$11-an-hour. Federal Express CEO, Fred Smith gets \$16 million and pays workers \$11-an-hour.

Inequality is not a result of “technology” and “education”—contemporary euphemisms for the ruling class cult of superiority—as liberal and conservative economists and journalists like to claim. Inequalities are a result of low wages, based on big profits, financial swindles, multi-trillion dollar public handouts and multi-billion-dollar tax evasion. The ruling class has mastered the “technology” of exploiting the state, through its pillage of the treasury, and the working class. Capitalist exploitation of low paid production workers provides additional

billions for the “philanthropic” billionaire family foundations to polish their public image—using another tax avoidance gimmick—self-glorifying “donations.”

Workers pay disproportional taxes for education, health, social and public services and subsidies for billionaires.

Billionaires in the arms industry and security/mercenary conglomerates receive over \$700 billion dollars from the federal budget, while over 100 million U.S. workers lack adequate health-care and their children are warehoused in deteriorating schools.

Workers and bosses: mortality rates

Billionaires and multi-millionaires and their families enjoy longer and healthier lives than their workers. They have no need for health insurance policies or public hospitals. CEO’s live on average ten years longer than a worker and enjoy twenty years more of healthy and pain-free lives.

Private, exclusive clinics and top medical care include the most advanced treatment and safe and proven medication which allow billionaires and their family members to live longer and healthier lives. The quality of their medical care and the qualifications of their medical providers present a stark contrast to the healthcare apartheid that characterizes the rest of the United States.

Workers are treated and mistreated by the health system. They have inadequate and often incompetent medical treatment, cursory examinations by inexperienced medical assistants and end up victims of the widespread over-prescription of highly addictive narcotics and other medications. Over-prescription of narcotics by incompetent “providers” has significantly contributed to the rise in premature deaths among workers, spiraling cases of opiate overdose, disability due to addiction and descent into poverty and homelessness. These irresponsible practices have

made additional billions-of-dollars in profits for the insurance corporate elite, who can cut their pensions and health-care liabilities as injured, disabled and addicted workers drop out of the system or die.

The shortened life expectancy for workers and their family members is celebrated on Wall Street and in the financial press. Over 560,000 workers were killed by opioids between 1999-2015 contributing to the decline in life expectancy for working age wage and salary earners and reduced pension liabilities for Wall Street and the Social Security Administration.

Inequalities are cumulative, inter-generational and multi-sectorial.

Silicon Valley executives “earn” a thousand times more than their production workers.

Billionaire families, their children and grandchildren, inherit and invest billions. They have privileged access to the most prestigious schools and medical facilities, and conveniently fall in love to equally privileged, well-connected mates to join their fortunes and form even greater financial empires. Their wealth buys favorable, even fawning, mass media coverage and the services of the most influential lawyers and accountants to cover their swindles and tax evasion.

Billionaires hire innovators and sweat shop MBA managers to devise more ways to slash wages, increase productivity and ensure that inequalities widen even further. Billionaires do not have to be the brightest or most innovative people: Such individuals can simply be bought or imported on the “free market” and discarded at will.

Billionaires have bought out or formed joint ventures with each other,

creating interlocking directorates. Banks, IT, factories, warehouses, food and appliance, pharmaceuticals and hospitals are linked directly to political elites who slither through doors of rotating appointments within the IMF, the World Bank, Treasury, Wall Street banks and prestigious law firms.

Consequences of inequalities

First and foremost, billionaires and their political, legal and corporate associates dominate the political parties. They designate the leaders and key appointees, thus ensuring that budgets and policies will increase their profits, erode social benefits for the masses and weaken the political power of popular organizations.

Secondly, the burden of the economic crisis is shifted on to the workers who are fired and later re-hired as part-time, contingent labor. Public bailouts, provided by the taxpayer, are channeled to the billionaires under the doctrine that Wall Street banks are too big to fail and workers are too weak to defend their wages, jobs and living standards.

Billionaires buy political elites, who appoint the World Bank and IMF officials tasked with instituting policies to freeze or reduce wages, slash corporate and public healthcare obligations and increase profits by privatizing public enterprises and facilitating corporate relocation to low wage, low tax countries.

As a result, wage and salary workers are less organized and less influential; they work longer and for less pay, suffer greater workplace insecurity and injuries—physical and mental—fall into decline and disability, drop out of the system, die earlier and poorer, and, in the process, provide unimaginable profits for the billionaire class. Even their addiction and deaths provide opportunities for huge profit—as the Sackler Family, manufacturers of Oxycontin, can attest.

The billionaires and their political acolytes argue that deeper regressive taxation would increase investments

and jobs. The data speaks otherwise. The bulk of repatriated profits are directed to buy back stock to increase dividends for investors; they are not invested in the productive economy. Lower taxes and greater profits for conglomerates means more buy-outs and greater outflows to low wage countries. In real terms taxes are already less than half the headline rate and are a major factor heightening the concentration of income and power—both cause and effect.

Corporate elites, the billionaires in the Silicon Valley-Wall Street global complex are relatively satisfied that their cherished inequalities are guaranteed and expanding under the Democratic-Republican Presidents—as the “good times” roll on.

Away from the “billionaire elite,” the “outsiders”—domestic capitalists—clamor for greater public investment in infrastructure to expand the domestic economy, lower taxes to increase profits, and state subsidies to increase the training of the labor force while reducing funds for healthcare and public education. They are oblivious to the contradiction.

In other words, the capitalist class as a whole, globalist and domestic alike, pursues the same regressive policies, promoting inequalities while struggling over shares of the profits.

One-hundred-and-fifty-million wage and salaried taxpayers are excluded from the political and social decisions that directly affect their income, employment, rates of taxation, and political representation.

...the capitalist class as a whole, globalist and domestic alike, pursues the same regressive policies, promoting inequalities while struggling over shares of the profits

They understand, or at least experience, how the class system works. Most workers know about the injustice of the fake “free trade” agreements and regressive tax regime, which weighs heavy on the majority of wage and salaried earners.

However, worker hostility and despair is directed against “immigrants” and against the “liberals” who have backed the import of cheap skilled and semi-skilled labor under the guise of “freedom.” This “politically correct”

image of imported labor covers up a policy, which has served to lower wages, benefits and living standards for American workers, whether they are in technology, construction or production. Rich conservatives, on the other hand, oppose immigration under the guise of “law and order” and to lower social expenditures—despite that fact that they all use imported nannies, tutors, nurses, doctors and gardeners to service their families. Their servants can always be deported when convenient.

The pro and anti-immigrant issue avoids the root cause for the economic exploitation and social degradation of the working class—the billionaire owners operating in alliance with the political elite.

In order to reverse the regressive tax practices and tax evasion, the low wage cycle and the spiraling death rates resulting from narcotics and other preventable causes, which profit insurance companies and pharmaceutical billionaires, class alliances need to be forged linking workers, consumers, pensioners, students, the disabled, the foreclosed homeowners, evicted tenants, debtors, the under-employed and immigrants as a unified political force.

Sooner said than done, but never tried! Everything and everyone is at stake: life, health and happiness.

—Global Research, October 5, 2017

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/how-billionaires-become-billionaires/5612125>



The Social Security “Big Lie”

Politicians are using the Nazi “Big Lie” to cheat American workers out of their Social Security.

BY DR. NAYVIN GORDON

September 4, 2017—For decades billionaire Foundations and conservative politicians have been spreading the big lie that Social Security is broke.¹ Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, wrote, “When one lies, one should lie big, and stick to it.” The fact is that the U.S. Government has borrowed some \$3 trillion from the Social Security Trust Fund—money now owed by Uncle Sam to millions of working Americans. Social Security is only broke if Uncle Sam defaults on its debts to us! The debt to Social Security is less than 20 percent of the total U.S. Government’s debt. Most of the debt, \$14.5 trillion, is owed to other countries and financial institutions of the richest one percent. But today’s propaganda fuses together ALL Uncle Sam’s debt to create the big lie that Social Security is the greatest debt problem. Democrats and Republicans have recently introduced the Social Security Commission Act of 2017, whose ultimate goal is to cut and privatize Social Security.

Politicians have not only borrowed from Social Security to run the government, but 70 percent of the national debt has been borrowed from banks, financial institutions, corporations and rich individuals. The politicians borrowed because instead of taxing the rich banks and corporations, they cut their taxes. As a result, workers’ taxes and Social Security payments provide almost 90 percent of the federal government’s revenues.² Over decades the politicians have allowed major corporations to escape paying billions in taxes, they have given subsidies in the billions to corporations and agribusiness, and they have allowed tax breaks for the oil and gas companies in the billions of dollars.³ Albert Einstein’s comments about politicians was right on target when he wrote;

“members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists...the consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population.”⁴

We must bust the monstrous Nazi Big Lie!

Uncle Sam—pay your debts to our Social Security!

The richest one percent who benefitted from the national debt must repay the debt now!

Millions in the streets WON Social Security and only Millions in motion can save it.

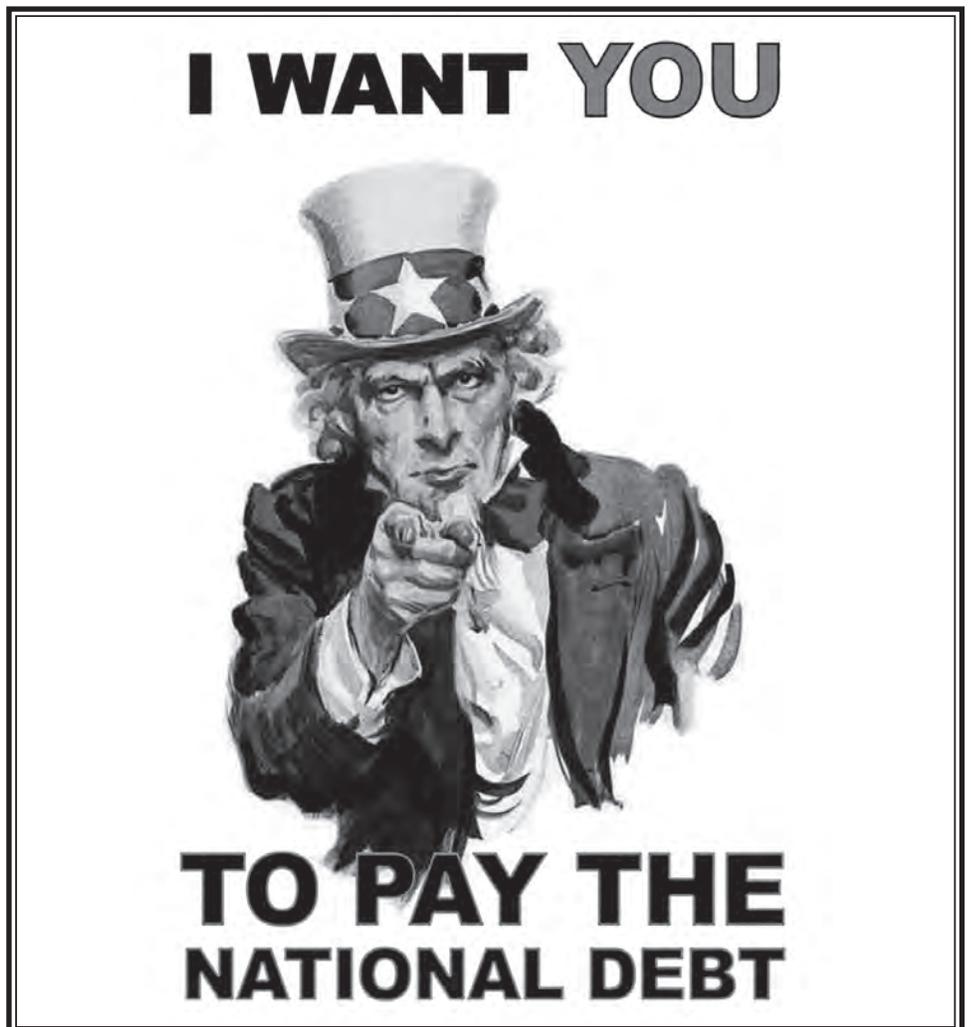
Dr. Gordon is a Family Physician in California who has written many articles on health and politics.

1 <https://www.cnsnews.com/commentary/romina-boccia/social-security-going-broke>

2 The White House Office of Management and Budget, “Historical Tables,” Table 2.1 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals/>

3 “Take The Rich of Welfare,” by Mark Zepezaur and Arthur Naiman, 1996; *The New York Times*, March 10, 2017

4 <https://monthlyreview.org/2009/05/01/why-socialism/>



Drugs, Money and Political Prostitution

BY DR. NAYVIN GORDON

Since the year 2000 at least 22 pharmaceutical companies have settled criminal and civil suits for over \$10 billion in fines. Companies have been found guilty of fraud, kickbacks, false claims, and off-label promotion. For example, in May 2007, Purdue Pharmaceuticals, makers of the opioid Oxycontin, was found guilty of “off label promotion” and paid over \$600 million in fines, one of the largest in history. This occurred during the acceleration of the opioid epidemic according to the Center for Disease Control. During one of the largest opioid epidemics in history, between 2014 and 2016, the pharmaceutical industry spent more than \$100 million lobbying Congress. Then in April 2016, at the height of the deadliest drug epidemic in U.S. history, and with the knowledge of at least 16 years of criminality by the pharmaceutical industry, “Congress effectively stripped the D.E.A., (Drug Enforcement Administration) of its most potent weapon against large drug companies suspected of spilling prescription narcotics onto the nation streets.”¹ During a massive public

health crisis Congress unanimously passed an Act entitled “Ensuring Patient Access and Drug Enforcement Act of 2016” which weakens the DEA’s ability to go after drug distributors. Congress had the audacity to lie about the purpose of the Act in the very definition of the Act: “Factors as may be relevant to and consistent with the public health and safety.” Not one politician voted against this Act, which was destined to accelerate the opioid epidemic that had already claimed more than 200,000 lives. Could there be a more crystal clear example of politicians servicing the one percent?

Albert Einstein’s comment about craven politicians was right on target when he wrote, “members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not, in fact, sufficiently protect the interest of the underprivileged sections of the population.”²

A 2014 study by Princeton University supported Einstein in its

conclusion: “business interests have substantial independent impact on U.S. government policies while the average citizen have little or no independent influence.”³

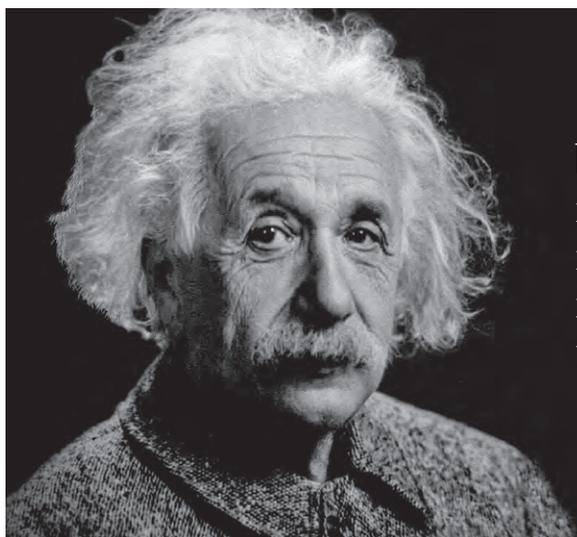
We currently live under a system that has become “democracy” in word only, where the health of the vast majority is sacrificed to the profits of corporations. We, the 99 percent, need a new system. Let us build a system without the corruption of money, a system of economic and political egalitarianism.

Dr. Gordon is a Family Physician in California who has written many articles about health and politics.

1 https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/investigations/dea-drug-industry-congress/?utm_term=.764ff23c5fd0

2 <https://monthlyreview.org/2009/05/01/why-socialism/reference>

3 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/testing-theories-of-american-politics-elites-interest-groups-and-average-citizens/62327F513959D0A304D4893B382B992B>



“...members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not, in fact, sufficiently protect the interest of the underprivileged sections of the population.”

—*Albert Einstein*

Bill Clinton's Favorite African

Paul Kagame wins re-election in Rwanda by 99 percent, arrests opponent

BY ANN GARRISON

How much longer can Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Benjamin Netanyahu, AIPAC, and associated Zionist organizations cover for Rwandan President Paul Kagame? How much longer can they claim that he was Rwanda's savior, that he stopped a genocide recalling the Holocaust, then helped Rwanda rise from the ashes?

This week another woman who dared to challenge him for the presidency says he has taken vengeance on her and her family. In 2010, Kagame imprisoned Victoire Ingabire, who is now serving the seventh of a fifteen-year prison sentence, and now he has arrested Diane Rwigara, who attempted to stand against him this year. Like Ingabire in 2010, Rwigara was told that her name could not appear on the ballot because her nomination papers were insufficient. Kagame's election bureaucracy is a Kafkaesque maze for anyone who might pose a real threat to his reign of terror.

Rwandan police arrested Ingabire, then put her under house arrest, shortly after her return to Rwanda in January 2010. They arrested and imprisoned her shortly after Kagame claimed re-election with an implausible 93 percent of the vote in August that year. They arrested Rwigara shortly after Kagame claimed an even more implausible 99 percent on August 4th. As of September 5, 2017, there were many conflicting reports and no definitive account of the timeline of events before, during, and after the arrest. *Aljazeera* was reporting that Rwigara had been arrested, charged, and then returned to her home. Rwigara's assistant said that she had taken over her *Twitter* feed and that Rwigara is now under house arrest, though not yet formally.

Earlier this year, Rwigara had told the *BBC* that she was expecting reprimand:

“Taking a stand or criticizing the Rwandan government is not an easy task. They do all in their power to try to discourage you and silence you. Our family businesses have been closed down. Our bank accounts have been seized. There is still a very high price for me to pay, and trust me, they have said that, after the elections, anybody who has spoken out, including my supporters, that: ‘We’ll deal with them.’”

In a press conference earlier this year, Rwigara described Rwanda much as Ingabire did, as a nation of extreme poverty and fear hidden behind its modern capital city, Kigali, with its hotels, its convention center, and its tourist industry, which not only makes a lot of money but also propagandizes visitors about Rwanda's miraculous recovery from genocide. The ruling party, she said, is more eager to impress white people than its own citizens:

“While all these problems are going on, mainly high unemployment and poverty, our government is spending money building luxury hotels. The convention center cost over \$300 million dollars—the most expensive building in Africa. Why are we spending the most when we are among the poorest? Most Rwandans do not have the basic necessities like water and electricity, so our taxes should be invested in the people first. Rwanda has given priority to impressing white people instead of impressing our own people. Our country's image, though important, should not take precedence over the well-being of Rwandans.”

Rwigara is a Rwandan Tutsi whose wealthy father supported the 1990 invasion of Rwanda from Uganda that ended in the 1994 massacres and General Paul Kagame's seizure of power. She became an outspoken critic of the government after her father died

in an automobile accident that she and her family blame on Rwandan authorities. She did not, like Victoire Ingabire, challenge the received history of the genocide, and she even went so far as to say that free speech should not be a cover for revising its history:

“The freedom of expression I'm talking about is not the freedom that denies or revises the genocide, the 1994 genocide. People should not hide under the umbrella of free speech for divisive statements. The freedom of expression I'm talking about is being able to have the debates without fear of reprisals. Almost all topics in Rwanda are taboo.”

Rwigara has not spoken out against Rwanda's catastrophic aggression in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as Ingabire did, either. Kagame was nevertheless unwilling to tolerate her criticism of Rwanda as it is now. Rwandan police arrested her and members of her family for, they say, tax evasion and forging signatures on her nomination papers.

Kagame did not empower women or stop a genocide

Nearly 60 percent of Rwanda's Members of Parliament are women, and Kagame is commonly praised for empowering women, but that's no more plausible than his 99 percent electoral victory or his claim to have stopped a genocide. He persecuted and silenced the only two women who dared stand up to him, and he didn't stop a genocide; he started one. He murdered the Rwandan and Burundian presidents, massacred his way to power in Rwanda, then invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo, slaughtered hundreds-of-thousands of Hutu refugees, and chased hundreds-of-thousands more through the jungle from Congo's east to west.

With his partner in crime Yoweri Museveni, he invaded, occupied, and plundered the resource wealth of the Congo, leaving millions of Congolese dead and displaced.

Congolese officials and military officers who are in fact Rwandan continue a stealth occupation today. Even the infamous warlord Bosco Ntaganda, who is now on trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC), is a Rwandan pretending to be Congolese. The ICC, a tool of Western imperialism, agrees to this pretense because their brief is to prosecute Ntaganda for crimes committed within the borders of Congo, not for Rwanda's crime against peace, the first and gravest international crime established by the Nuremberg Principles :

(a) Crimes against peace:

(i) Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances;

(ii) Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under (i).

The U.S. and UK covertly supported Rwanda's invasions of Congo, then helped Kagame justify decades of ongoing aggression in the name of hunting Hutu perpetrators of genocide. The ICC helps them create illusions of international justice for Congolese without acknowledging the Rwandan war of aggression that they supported.

What will happen to Diane Rwigara and Victoire Ingabire?

It seems likely that Diane Rwigara will be tried in a kangaroo court on trumped up charges and sent to prison, once again like Ingabire. If so, and if she appeals to the Supreme Court, she will lose, as Ingabire did. Some things in Rwanda are as predictable as presidential elections.

There is one glimmer of hope: Victoire Ingabire's appeal of her conviction in Rwanda to the African Court of Human and People's Rights in Arusha,

Tanzania. Rwanda attempted to withdraw from the court's jurisdiction after it agreed to hear her appeal, but the rules of the court and international law do not allow a member nation to withdraw after it has been named as party to a case that the court has agreed to hear. Rwanda refused to appear at the March 2017 hearing, alleging bias, but the court proceeded to weigh the evidence and it could rule this month. Ingabire's conviction is such a blatant case of political persecution that it will test the African court's independence.

No matter how the court decides, however, it has no enforcement apparatus. If it overturns Ingabire's conviction, she will win no more than a moral victory because the rule of international law is an unrealized ideal. Only international pressure to accept the court's judgment could lead to her release, and no matter how bad Kagame's press gets, he is always shielded from consequence by his powerful Western friends—Clinton, Blair, Netanyahu, AIPAC, etc. Kagame's state press advocated for Hillary Clinton's election and made it clear that he was deeply disappointed by her defeat. The Clintons, and Bill Clinton's weepy lies about having failed to stop the genocide, have served him for two decades.

Rwanda depends on foreign aid for 40 percent of its budget. The U.S. is its top bilateral donor, the UK its second, but the flailing Trump Administration hasn't

turned any attention to Rwanda. It hasn't even managed to hire a new Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

In the UK, the Tories have supported Kagame, as Tony Blair and his government did, despite all the evidence of Kagame's crimes. After Rwanda's M23 militia ravaged the Kivu Provinces in 2012-13, Britain sharply increased its aid to Rwanda from £59 million in 2012-13, to £84 million in 2013-14. In 2014-15, British aid to Rwanda was £70 million, and a year later, £66 million.

Britain was the only major country to congratulate Kagame on his ridiculous 99 percent win in the August presidential elections. If, however, Jeremy Corbyn becomes the UK's next prime minister, it could be a new dawn for the UK's relations with Rwanda and its totalitarian ruler. Corbyn is an opponent of unilateral military intervention of any sort, and a staunch advocate of international law.

Ann Garrison is an independent journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2014, she received the Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Democracy and Peace Prize for her reporting on conflict in the African Great Lakes region.

—Black Agenda Report, September 6, 2017

<https://blackagendareport.com/bill-clintons-favorite-african-paul-kagame-wins-re-election-99-arrests-opponent>



U.S. War in West Africa

By EDDIE HAYWOOD

The October 4, 2017 killings of four U.S. Green Berets in Niger has provided a rare glimpse into the far-reaching American military operations throughout the African continent which have been conducted almost entirely in secret.

Pentagon officials told reporters that the ambush was carried out by a self-radicalized group supposedly affiliated with ISIS. The Pentagon additionally admitted that at least 29 patrols similar to the one that was fatally ambushed have been carried out by American soldiers in Niger.

According to AFRICOM, the U.S. military command based in Stuttgart, Germany, the U.S. Special Forces deployed to Niger are tasked with providing training, logistics, and intelligence to assist the Nigerien military in fighting militants affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Mali and Boko Haram in neighboring Nigeria. AFRICOM has officially stated that its forces interact with the Nigerian army in a “non-combat advisory” capacity.

The circumstances surrounding the ambush, which resulted in the deaths of the four Green Berets, expose AFRICOM’s claim of non-engagement as a lie. The killings occurred during a joint patrol of elite American soldiers and Nigerien forces in a remote hostile region on the border with Mali known for frequent raids conducted by Islamist militants. Some 800 U.S. commandos are deployed to bases in Niamey and Agadez making quite clear the offensive role that the American military is playing in Niger.

Underlining the incident is Niger’s configuration in Washington’s imperialist offensive across Africa. The expanding levels of U.S. military forces arrayed across the continent have increasingly taken on the character of an occupying army. According to the

Pentagon, there are a total of 1,000 American troops in the vicinity of the Lake Chad Basin, which includes eastern Niger, Chad, northern Nigeria and part of the Central African Republic. An additional 300 troops are stationed to the south in Cameroon.

The rise of these warring Islamist militias which have transformed West Africa into a battlefield is the end result of Washington’s decades-long strategy in cultivating these forces as a proxy army in its wars for regime change, at first, in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and subsequently in Africa.

After its establishment in 2008 as an independent command, AFRICOM has significantly expanded American military influence and troop deployments on the African continent. Measuring the breadth of U.S. military expansion is the construction of a \$100 million base in Agadez in central Niger, from which the U.S. Air Force conducts regular surveillance drone flights across the Sahel region.

Augmenting the Special Forces contingent in the region are military personnel stationed at several dozen bases and outposts including a U.S. base in Garoua, Cameroon.

The special operations units in Africa have their genesis in 1980, after the Pentagon created Special

Operations Command (SOCOM) to conduct a raid on the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Iran, to rescue American hostages. Over the years, SOCOM has vastly broadened its scope, and currently has forces stationed on every continent around the globe.

Made up of various units of the U.S. military, including Green Berets, Delta Force, and Navy Seals, SOCOM carries out a broad spectrum of offensive operations including assassinations, counter-terrorism, reconnaissance, psychological operations, and foreign troop training. Under AFRICOM, these forces form a subgroup of SOCOM designated as Special Operations Command in Africa (SOCAFRICA).

Between 2006 and 2010 the deployment of U.S. Special Forces troops in Africa increased 300 percent. However, from 2010 to 2017 the numbers of deployed troops exploded by nearly 2000 percent, occupying more than 60 outposts tasked with carrying out over 100 missions at any given moment across the continent.

The scale of the military expansion which began in earnest under the Obama administration is part of a renewed “scramble for Africa,” comprised of a reckless drive for economic dominance over Africa’s vast economic resources which threatens to transform the entire continent into a battlefield.

The immediate roots of the Niger ambush can be traced to the 2011 U.S./NATO war in Libya, which resulted in the removal and assassination of Libya’s leader Muammar Gaddafi. Under the Obama administration, Washington cultivated and armed various Islamist militant groups with ties to Al-Qaeda as a proxy force to carry out its aim of regime change. The resulting U.S./NATO bombardment left Libyan society in shambles, and the Islamist fight-

ers spilled forth and out across North Africa and south to the Sahel.

In 2012, as a consequence of a U.S. and French backed *coup* against the government in Bamako, Tuareg rebels in northern Mali took advantage of the chaos resulting from the *coup* to stage a rebellion. After the Tuareg militants began taking control over cities and territory as it cut deeper into southern Mali, France with the Obama administrations backing deployed 4,000 troops to the country to neutralize the Tuareg rebels, eventually stabilizing the government it placed in Bamako.

While the Tuareg rebellion may have been halted by the U.S.-backed French offensive, Islamist fighters from Libya were pouring into Mali, with many taking up arms against the Western backed puppet government. The Islamist fighters largely united into one large group, declaring allegiance to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The military forces of Niger and Chad, which participated in the U.S./French intervention in Mali, have become frequent targets by the Islamist militants who began conducting cross-border raids and launched attacks on patrols and garrisons.

The rise of these warring Islamist militias which have transformed West Africa into a battlefield is the end result of Washington's decades-long strategy in cultivating these forces as a proxy army in its wars for regime change, at



first, in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and subsequently in Africa.

A key element of Washington's military expansion in the region is the significant economic resources that it aims to secure for American corporate interests.

Underscoring France's military deployment are the French economic interests it seeks to protect not only in Mali, but throughout West Africa, the region which was once part of its colonial empire. In Niger, the French energy giant, Arven, has established mining operations extracting the country's rich uranium resources.

For its part, Washington has enlisted the participation of the military forces of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Mali in its drive for dominance of the Sahel and West Africa, with all of these countries featuring U.S. outposts or bases.

A key element of Washington's military expansion in the region is the significant economic resources that it aims to secure for American corporate interests. On behalf of these interests, and complementary to its military operation, Washington has constructed a \$300 million embassy in Niamey.

Washington's military interventions in Africa must also be seen as an effort to offset China's growing economic influence on the continent. Beijing in recent years has secured investment deals with African governments in nearly every sector of Africa's economy.

China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) purchased the permit for oil drilling in Niger's Agadem Basin, and CNPC also constructed and operates the Soraz refinery near Zinder, Niger's second largest city. Deals by Beijing for the construction of pipelines traversing through Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Cameroon are currently in the development stage, causing no small amount of consternation in Washington.

—*Black Agenda Report*, October 25, 2017

<https://www.blackagendareport.com/why-us-war-west-africa>



Indonesia's "Communist Ghosts"

BY ANDRE VLTCHER

It is September 29th, 2017, Friday, just one day before the most sinister anniversary in the entire Southeast Asia.

On September 30th, 1965, the Indonesian military obeying orders from foreign powers (mainly the U.S. and the UK,) overthrew the progressive and anti-imperialist government of President Sukarno, murdering between one and three million men, women and children (including almost all members of the Communist Party of Indonesia—PKI.) This was done with the direct help of almost all the major religious organizations (Muslim, Protestant, Catholic and Hindu.) The bloodshed continued well into 1966, and the "Rivers were choked with corpses and ran red from blood," as I was told by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the greatest Indonesian novelist. All the hopes for a socialist, just and egalitarian motherland were wasted.

Before the *coup*, Indonesia used to be a true internationalist nation, and was one of the proud founders of the Non-Aligned Movement (the West Javanese city of Bandung hosted its establishing conference in 1955.) President Sukarno and his progressive and patriotic government used to hold in their hands almost all the natural resources, trying to build a proud, artistic and productive nation. Sukarno once even humiliated the U.S. Ambassador, in front of a huge crowd, at a packed stadium: "To hell with your aid!" He did not need any Western aid. He was presiding over potentially one of the richest nations on Earth.

The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI,) the third largest in the world after those of the Soviet Union and China, was going to win the elections, comfortably and democratically, in 1966, while being fully supported by President Sukarno. Their manifesto was

clear: anti-imperialism, social justice and land reforms. But who were some of the largest landowners in Indonesia during that period? Religious leaders! And they, together with the military and corrupt elites, decided: "No!" This has to be stopped! No justice. No internationalism. No socialism." They betrayed the nation and its people; they committed treason and on September 30, 1965, overthrew socialist democracy.

The results were horrifying. Perhaps the worst massacres of the 20th Century took place. Mass slaughter, mass rape, and cutting off of female breasts, torture, and shortly after the initial horrors, overflowing prisons and concentration camps. Around 40 percent of all the teachers of Java were slaughtered and the military was substituted into the school classrooms. Film studios and traditional theatres were shut down, and writers were sent to Buru concentration camp. Intellectualism was fully discouraged, while Communism, the Chinese language and culture, but also all progressive

arts and creativity were either ridiculed, or out rightly banned. Promoted instead, were Western-style turbo-capitalism (that which was invented for the colonies, not that for the local consumption in Europe and North America,) "religions" (based on repetitive rituals, not on intellectual or spiritual search for God,) "family values" (read: patriarchal oppression,) an empty pop culture, and selfishness, boosted by consumerism. All this combined gave birth to some of the worst corruption levels in the world.

Indonesia as it used to be before September 30, 1965, died. Unable to produce anything of substantial value, it began perpetrating the unbridled plunder of its own natural resources, predominantly on behalf of foreign conglomerates. The entire beautiful and naturally rich, enormous islands, like Borneo (the largest island in Asia and the second largest in the world,) Sumatra and Papua, were converted into devastated, poisoned and fully privatized ecological and social nightmares.



It seems that killing everything decent and hopeful has not been enough for this regime. Even memories have to be killed, even dreams. The great progressive past of Indonesia is being smeared and twisted, until there is nothing more left, only confusion and mechanical religious, family and commercial rituals.

Now, one of the mainstream Indonesian magazines, *Tempo*, put on its September 25—October 1, 2017 cover: “SEKALI LAGI HANTU PKI” (“Once Again, Ghost of PKI.”)

Whenever it suits the corrupt elites, the military and the religious cadres (three main pillars of the Indonesia oppressive regime,) the Communist ghost is evoked. It is depicted as a monstrous, nasty, and murderous creature. Indonesian children were taught that the Communist hammer was there to smash the heads of the people, while the sickle was—to cut their throats.

Islamic organizations, as well as the military and police are “guarding the nation” from vicious atheist religious “gangs” and the security forces regularly dispersing countless meetings. Those who dare to address topics such as social inequality, the lack of decent medical care, affordable education, housing and other basic services, get physically attacked, or legally sanctioned.

MPs and some government officials, who dare to talk about the necessity to redistribute the wealth of the country, favoring the poor, get attacked or at least openly smeared, including such individuals like the present President, Joko Widodo. Popular, extremely effective and left-leaning, the Governor of Jakarta, “Ahok,” was recently locked up in a prison for “insulting Islam”—on thoroughly bogus charges. His biggest “sin” appeared to be his determination to build a mass public transportation system (instead of forcing people to use private vehicles, as all previous pro-

business administrations have been doing, submissively,) creating green public areas, building drainage and cleaning clogged and polluted canals.

“Ahok” is of Chinese origin, a great “crime” in the racially intolerant Indonesia. President Widodo is not. No matter what his “blood” is, he is repeatedly accused of being a “Communist,” especially after his State of the Nation speech earlier this year. He has been addressing issues related to social justice, something thoroughly unacceptable in extremely pro-business and pro-Western Indonesia.

Putting the interests of his people above the interests of foreign corporations has gained him countless enemies, at home (from the elites servile to the West) and abroad. His arch-rival and enemy, General Prabowo (former commander of the notorious Kopassus Special Forces under Suharto) is taking full advantage of the situation.

Many Islamists are now calling President Widodo “a Communist.” In Indonesia, it is synonymous with a threat and it could also mean a death sentence.

And so it is September 29th, 2017, Friday, in Jakarta, Indonesia. Thousands of protesters are gathering in front of the main gate of the Parliament. Today it is hot and humid, and the air is hopelessly polluted.

A river of human beings flows slowly. Today it consists predominantly of Muslim militants. Loudspeakers are blasting “Allahu Akbar!” and almost simultaneously:

“Ganyang, ganyang, ganyang PKI
Ganyang PKI, sekarang juga!”
(Destroy, destroy, destroy PKI
Crush PKI right now!)

These are mainly men, excited and determined. Some women are present, too. Most of them are fully covered. And there are also some children, clinging to their parents, several of them scared, but others clearly enjoying the loud yells and deafening noise.

Numerous black banners, carrying Arabic insignia, can be spotted in the hands of demonstrators, some suspiciously resembling those of the ISIS. Other flags belong to such organizations as the outlawed but largely tolerated Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, which is determined to establish a caliphate all over this vast archipelago.

Theoretically illegal but also tolerated Forum Pembela Islam (FPI)—Islamic Defender’s Front—is operating openly, and it is rubbing shoulders with the police and other security forces. No one would dare or even bothers to stop them from giving speeches or publicly displaying force.

It is obvious that the law is taken seriously only when it comes to the Communists (who are now practically non-existent in this country,) or to any socially or people-oriented movements. Radical Islam is increasingly becoming untouchable, as it generally defends the *status quo*, as well as the political interests of several high-ranking extreme right-wing military officers, business elites, and Western imperialists.

I look around and I see not a single Western reporter. Surely they are busy sitting in their clubs, luxury hotels and condominiums, dutifully scribbling that Indonesia is a “vibrant democracy,” and “a country known for its predominantly tolerant brand of Islam;” an official Western dogma since the 1965 *coup*.

At one point I’m approached by a group of young men with a small camera.

“What do you think about PKI?” I’m asked in English.

I pretend to be totally brain-dead. I smile. We shake hands.

“You killed PKI here, didn’t you?” I reply with a question.

“You think so?” they are grinning, talking to me as if I was a child. “You really think so? You are mistaken. PKI are like rats; they are hiding under-

ground...they are everywhere. But don't worry, we will get them all, soon!"

"Islam is a religion of peace. Indonesians are peaceful people," his friend concludes. He sounds like the *BBC*.

Then it is my turn to ask questions. I go from person to person. I want to know what do they really know about the PKI, about Communism? For years and decades, Indonesians have been bombarded by grotesque propaganda which was aiming at discrediting everything great and positive that ever took place in the Communist and socialist countries, from the Soviet Union and China, to Cuba, Venezuela, Vietnam, North Korea and dozens of other left-wing states all over the world.

After 1965, the perception of Indonesians about the world was never based on knowledge and well-informed analyses, but instead on the lowest grade of Western and local propaganda, on racist *clichés*, and on the gross censorship of everything that could challenge official dogmas.

I talk to a dozen "Communism-haters" and I realize that they know absolutely nothing about the subject they are loudly shouting about. Some are clearly paid to be here. Some have nothing better to do. Some are, perhaps, subconsciously scared about the emptiness of their lives in present-day Indonesia, and they need to cheer each other up, with hate speeches and feelings that they are not alone, that they are like hundreds-of-millions of others.

Mrs. Bode from Gerakan Ibu Negeri (Movement of the Country's Mothers):

"We are here protesting against resurgence of the PKI! PKI is here; it exists! Their members are all over the social media. They even held seminars, recently."

Some seminars were held recently. Not by the PKI, but by scholars and activists who were trying to address the history of Indonesia, particularly the *coup* of 1965. But the military inter-

fered. Orders were given to break up such encounters. A one-sided interpretation of history is the main and sacred pillar of the propaganda unleashed by the regime.

Mr. Wahnad from Majelis Taklim Nurul Ikhlas (Islamic studies assembly) from the city of Bekasi:

"We are supporters of the HTI and we are against the government regulation which bans extremist mass organizations like ours. But PKI is real danger to our country. We want them to be banned. Now we even have them represented in the Parliament. Ribka Tjiptaning, an MP from PDIP, proudly stated that she is a daughter of a former PKI member!"

Poor Ms. Ribka Tjiptaning is the daughter of a former PKI member (and a Javanese aristocrat) who was hanged upside-down and tortured in front of her and her little brother (when they were children,) before being sent to a prison. Consequently, each of her steps is being scrutinized as if under a microscope. She is clearly left wing, perhaps the most progressive Indonesian politician. And she wrote a book called *I'm Proud To Be a Daughter of a PKI Member*. But this lone socialist voice could hardly be mistaken for a great renaissance of the Communist thought in Indonesia.

A small, bearded man wearing white robes introduced himself only as Hamba Allah (Allah's slave):

"We are against the resurrection of PKI. They have distributed t-shirts, pictures, and other things, and there are even some children of the PKI members now pushing this ideology."

Ms. Khairunnisa from a madrasah in Sawangan, Depok:

"We are against the resurgence of the PKI. PKI was a party that did some sadistic things to Muslims in general and to Ulamas in particular."

"Sadistic things?" I wonder. The PKI was a relatively tame, constitutional

and democratic political party. Even in 1965, many of its members were Muslims. Unless by "sadistic things" she meant that it was pushing for land reforms, and had it won the elections in 1966 (it definitely would have done, if the West had not intervened,) it would most definitely have broken the scandalous and feudal mass land ownership by the religious leaders.

"Yes, sadistic," Ms. Khairunnisa raises her voice.

"How do you know?" I ask.

She replies without hesitation:

"We know from G30S/PKI film and also from what the teachers told us. We haven't read any history books on this issue; why should we? We know anyway..."

By "G30S/PKI" she means an official state propaganda film, full of gore, with which all children of Indonesia were terrorized and shocked with on the anniversary of the *coup*. The film was directed by an arch "cultural" collaborator with the "New Order" regime of General Suharto—Mr. Arifin C. Noer.

At one point, I get fully covered by an enormous white flag with Arabic script. The flag covers several lanes of the roadway. Perhaps, as a foreigner, I'm being shown my place, taught a lesson, but I don't care. I just sit down on the concrete road divider and rest for a couple of minutes. It is cooler under the flag, and all those aggressive, militant noises are now mercifully muted.

"Indonesia is a peaceful country," I think, sarcastically. That's what the West wants everybody to believe, convincing even Indonesians themselves that it is the case. Indonesia committed three horrid genocides after 1965—against its own people, against inhabitants of East Timor, and now against Papuans. Here, I have witnessed and covered all sorts of horrors, for decades: from the mass rapes of Chinese women in Jakarta and Solo, to religious violence in Ambon, Lombok and else-

where. Even members of most of the non-Sunni Muslim groups (including Shia, Liberal Islam, Ahmadiyah) are frequently attacked, even physically liquidated.

The West praises Indonesia, as long as the country allows its companies to plunder the vast natural resources, in such places as Borneo (Kalimantan,) Sumatra and Papua, as long as Indonesia remains anti-Communist, as long as its elites—business, military and religious—are willing to sacrifice hundreds-of-millions of its defenseless, desperately uninformed and mainly wretched citizens.

“Protests in front of the Parliament were confusing. They brought the issue of PKI awakening. But they were led by the hardline Islamist group, HTI, which is itself banned,” explained Iman Soleh, a professor at the Faculty of Social and Political Science (University of Padjadjaran—UNPAD.) He continued:

“In the meantime, it is suspected that the demonstrations were supported by anti-Jokowi (President Joko Widodo’s nickname) parties, especially Gerindra and PKS...also Aksi 299 is allegedly funded by General Prabowo group, which always uses the month of September to bring forward the issue of ‘PKI awakening’...of course it does it in order to weaken Jokowi’s government.”

In Indonesia, everything appears to be confusing, even what is and what isn’t truly Communist.

Several months ago I met a former Indonesian Mujahedeen fighter in Afghanistan, who barefacedly told me that the present-day Russia is actually Communist, and so is Assad’s government in Syria. According to him, even the governments of Karzai and Ghani in NATO occupied Afghanistan continue to be essentially Communist.

In the minds of many local people, Communist ghosts appear to be crawling out from every corner, even from the tiniest cracks in the floor.

Indonesia is scared; it is clearly not at peace with itself.

It is not really scared of “Communism,” but of something else, although it finds very difficult to define what exactly is frightening it.

Between one and three million corpses could compile an unimaginably huge mountain of horrors. Most of the Indonesian families have both victims and killers in their ranks. And the killings in 1965/66 Indonesia were not perpetrated “long-distance,” by pressing some button. People were often slaughtered with bare hands. Victims looked into the eyes of their killers and tormenters, and they were begging, screaming, howling.

There were never any trials like those that took place in Chile, Argentina or South Africa. There was no serious reconciliation process. The military leaders are not rotting in jail; they are actually running the country.

In fact, the crimes have never been acknowledged. Even worse: the victims are still being officially blamed for the beginning of the 1965 “tragedy.”

A bad conscience is hanging over this entire enormous archipelago. Bad conscience because of at least three genocides committed in the last half-a-century, because of selling the entire country to foreign interests, because of the unimaginable plunder of this once, a long time ago, beautiful and abundant land.

Bad conscience is being silenced by loud senseless sounds of brainless pop music, by countless religious rituals, and by continuous attempts not to read anything serious, not to learn and not to understand.

Another anniversary of the terrible event has just passed. And thousands took to the streets to protest against the victims. They went to insult the memory of those who were mercilessly slaughtered on orders coming from the West. They went to demand that the days of true independence and the greatness of the Indonesian nation would never return.

Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. Three of his latest books are a revolutionary novel Aurora and two bestselling works of political non-fiction: Exposing Lies Of The Empire and Fighting Against Western Imperialism.

—Global Research, October 10, 2017

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/52-years-after-fascist-genocide-indonesians-scared-of-communist-ghosts/5612709>



Fanon's Knife and Puerto Rico

BY JOSÉ TIRADO

Colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat. —Frantz Fanon

There are many reasons to oppose colonialism. And there are many images which seer into the mind the utterly destructive nature of colonialism. My own favorite example is a horrific picture from the “Belgian” Congo of a despondent Congolese man on the sunny porch of some Euro-style home looking with total forlornness at the severed hands and feet of his children. As was policy at the time, they probably did not work hard enough for the rapacious chocolatiers and paid the price with their limbs. Only one word emerged from my lips the first time I saw that picture: revolution. This is what the word was meant for. No human relationship that so devalues a child's life (and by extension, their parents' and their entire culture) deserves to stand. It must be destroyed forever. Fanon's knife needs to be drawn on occasion.

Some might say the recent Puerto Rico crisis is nowhere near the alarming brutality of those times. Regularly counseled patience and indoctrinated to believe the U.S. ultimately has its interests at heart, too many Puerto Ricans have abandoned their own dignity to apologize for the relationships' many failures. There are now more Puerto Ricans on the mainland (4.9 million) than living on the island (3.5) and Puerto Rico has more people than 21 U.S. states. So one would think the news of Hurricane Maria would be regular, the media coverage vigorous, and the convoys of aid immediate. No such luck. One-point-five million people now lack potable water. Since last week. The pictures of devastation are sobering. And as of last night (the 26th), the first reported deaths due to generators failing (there still is no electricity) have been relayed. This is an enormous crisis. There are many who

suspect that there is no surprise here. That the slow starvation of Puerto Ricans out of their homes, over to the U.S. where they will then “assimilate” and call themselves “Americans” proudly while the vultures buy and chop up the island into manageable pieces for their rich cronies, has been the goal for years and is *de facto* the plan. There will be plenty of quislings to help them, too. If we needed any more proof (we really don't) of the U.S. attitude and intentions to Puerto Rico, it's here today.

But what are the options? A bit of historical context might illuminate the problem a bit.

When the U.S. took over Puerto Rico in 1898, Puerto Ricans fed themselves. Their economy was primarily agricultural. Around 40 percent of the land was given over to coffee, 32 percent for growing food for local consumption, 15 percent to sugar and one percent for tobacco. Over 90 percent of the farms and agricultural resources were owned by local Puerto Ricans. Within a few years, U.S. tariffs required that Puerto Rican coffee had to be sent to the U.S. before it could be sold in Europe. The 1899 hurricane and the adoption of U.S. currency on the island was the death knell of Puerto Rican coffee production. U.S. companies then began buying up land and soon sugar became the dominant crop, production increasing by an incredible 1200 percent by 1929 with 80 percent owned by U.S. sugar companies. In the years between 1899-1929, unemployment went from 17 percent to 36 percent with one-quarter to a third of workers unemployed most of the year. Eventually local food production collapsed and export-dominated agricultural production became the norm. By 1940, 80 percent “of all farmland was owned by large corporations or land-

lords with 500 acres or more.” (Perez, 1976, pp. 6-7). Thus, during the Great Depression and up to the Second World War, Puerto Ricans were dirt poor, dependent upon the largess of the U.S. for food and other resources amid a remarkable set of political machinations which mandated English, actually banned Spanish, and in open correspondence its overlords regarded locals as “mongrels” and “cannibals” whose “race mixing” as unsettling.

Growing during this time were a class of “*pitiyanquis*” (little Yankees), the “quislings” of Puerto Rico who managed to ingratiate themselves to the U.S. and benefit as minor officials in the local government, whose positions were always at the mercy of their obsequiousness to their colonial masters. They morphed into the pro-statehood and pro-commonwealth parties who couldn't imagine living without their connection to the U.S. and whose descendants remain dominant in Puerto Rican politics to this day. It is a classic colonial mindset Fanon would have recognized and deplored.

But once upon a time there was resistance. The first was the independence strand within the Puerto Rico Union Party, which also had statehood and local autonomy trends within it. After the 1917 Jones Act was passed, the Union Party broke into factions of which the Nationalist Party (formed in 1922) took the banner of full independence. The Socialist Party had left and right wing trends which eventually also ended up splitting into a Liberal Party (the left trend, fully in favor of independence) and a Socialist Party, which joined forces with the Republican Party (founded in 1899 and assimilationist.) It was the charismatic Pedro Albizu Campos who led the Nationalist Party into challenging the corrupt alliance of the SP and the Republicans and force-

fully advocating for independence. However, years of suppression by the dominant U.S.-backed local government leading to massacres, imprisonment, repression of Nationalist speakers, and finally COINTEL*Puerto Rico* disruption of ANY independent movement all led to a conclusion many Puerto Ricans quickly absorbed: advocating for independence can lead to brutal suppression or even death. Joining up with the U.S., keeping one's head low and subserviently accepting U.S. domination of all aspects of life can lead to safety within the confines of a colonial relationship. To this day, this sentiment prevails, with emotional support for *independentistas* high but practical political support always going to the deferred parties of the *status quo*. No matter how many referenda are held, Puerto Ricans back down, fearing being cast adrift without help. Just like they are now.

As of this week, 80 percent of Puerto Rico's agricultural sector has been destroyed. Its electric grid is dead. Potable water is scarce and, already laboring under the crushing neo-liber-

al regime of debt repayment (*aka* squeezing blood from a plantain) with a U.S.-appointed fiscal control board fully committed to the Grecification of Puerto Rico, prospects for the average Puerto Rican look awful. As if it wasn't bad enough. Schools have closed, unemployment is already 12 percent, there is a 46 percent poverty rate and, with a median income of less than \$20,000, Puerto Ricans have an income rate LOWER than the poorest U.S. state, Mississippi. Puerto Rico is a broken colony, with a broken people whose imaginations seem to have died. Statehooders will cry and beg their masters asserting that liberation is "too risky" and they'll continue to drink off the rapidly drying teat of colonial milk cows who will be buying up more land and pushing out more people, year after year. But this is unsustainable.

So, is the U.S. just waiting for all the people in Puerto Rico to just leave or die so they can buy up all the land for rich people to play in their newly concrete fortified hotels nine months a year? I don't know, but it sure appears that way from where I and many other

Puerto Ricans I have spoken with stand. And remember, the hurricane season is not over, and the storms are getting bigger. If this doesn't wake us up, what will?

Nevertheless, for the immediate future some things are changing, even as I write this (perhaps this Administration is getting beaned over the head enough to finally respond): apparently Senator McCain has said a repeal of the Jones Act is long overdue and the USNS Comfort has just been sent.

But the long-term future of Puerto Rico looks bleak, in fact, very bleak unless Puerto Ricans unite to claim their unique identity and reclaim their island. It is time that a vibrant, revolutionary movement arise to demand what was stolen years ago: our independence and with it, our self-respect. We cannot continue to be beggars in our own land crying for help when disaster strikes while the land is bought from under our feet and the resources privatized.

Time to end the colonial relationship once and for all. ¡Viva Puerto Rico libre!

José M. Tirado is a Puerto Rican poet, Buddhist priest and political writer living in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland, known for its elves, "hidden people" and lava fields. His articles and poetry have been featured in CounterPunch, Cyrano's Journal, The Galway Review, Dissident Voice, La Respuesta, Op-Ed News, among others.

—CounterPunch, September 29, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/09/29/fanons-knife-and-puerto-rico/>



Puerto Rico and the Jones Act Conundrum

By JACK HEYMAN

October 23, 2017—When Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on September 20, the whole transportation and communication infrastructure went down—the power grid, bridges, roads, cell towers—devastating the entire island. Most people are still without the basic necessities of life, a month later. Emergency logistics are dysfunctional and telephone service barely exists.

FEMA's bumbling for one month has looked like a rerun of a *Keystone Cops* movie. Although the marine terminals were loaded with commercial cargo since before the hurricane, there was no way for workers to reach the port facilities, nor power to operate the port safely. Day after day cargo sat idle as people's desperation for water, food and life-saving medicine mounts. The early death toll was 48, but *NPR* has reported an additional 49 deaths since the storm and Puerto Rico's Center for Investigative Reporting found 69 hospitals had morgue at "capacity" as isolated towns and villages are reached the death toll will climb.

The Jones Act under attack...anew

Often when a major accident occurs the mainstream media are quick to blame workers. However, in the case of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, many liberals and leftists have joined in the union bashing charging the Jones Act, which is supported by maritime unions, with stopping vital shipments of aid. While it may be true that Jones Act cargo may cost more, it is not true that the Act (which requires that shipping between U.S. ports be in U.S.-registered vessels) is preventing necessary aid from reaching the people. However, no such protectionist U.S. laws, including the Jones Act, should be imposed on the colony of Puerto Rico, and that goes for the U.S. imperi-

alist embargo on trade with Cuba and trade sanctions on Venezuela and Russia as well.

The fact is there are plenty of U.S. bottoms to sail to the island. The Maritime Administration (MARAD) and the Department of Defense (DOD) manage 300 commercial vessels. And there are four Jones Act shipowners, Horizon, Sea Star, Crowley and Trailer Bridge that operate five container vessels and 12 barges on the Puerto Rico trade.

The blame for the lack of transportation and distribution of vital goods lies squarely with the U.S. government and its colonial oppression of Puerto Rico.

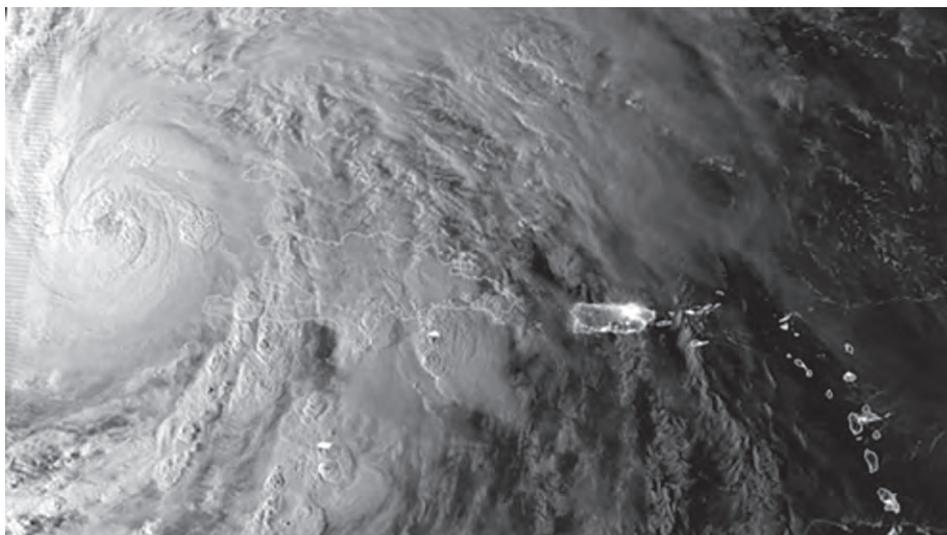
The Jones Act may pass on higher prices to an impoverished colonial people and that should not be, but there is another aspect to this question. Some of the most reactionary forces of the U.S. ruling class are trying to use the Puerto Rican hurricane relief crisis to get rid of the Jones Act, not because it would aid Puerto Rico but because it provides jobs for shipbuilders and seamen in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Much left opposition to the Jones Act comes from ignorance of the law and a knee jerk reaction to appear "anti-imperialist." What it shows is their disconnect

with the working class and blindness toward the capitalists' machinations.

Capitalists and their news media often claim that good union wages cost the public higher prices. That's the mantra of Wal-Mart and the non-union big box stores who extol the "virtues" of the profit system. The danger is that this cacophony, unwittingly supported by "progressives," could lead to repeal of the entire U.S. Jones Act, a longtime campaign of the right wing, anti-union *National Review*, Senator John McCain and most of the Wall Street banksters.

The 1920 Merchant Marine Act or the Jones Act as it is known, was promulgated to protect the American shipbuilding and seafaring industries.

The Jones Act does not include the territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands nor should it include the colony of Puerto Rico. Both should be independent. However, it should remain intact for the continental U.S. Calling to free Puerto Rico from the restrictions of this U.S. sabotage law is part of the struggle for independence, but to call for abolition of the Jones Act in the U.S. would mean the destruction of maritime unions and the loss of hard-won union jobs.



A colony faces natural catastrophe and imperial oppression

Today, the colony of Puerto Rico is in debt \$70 billion dollars and is basically bankrupt. The island just sustained damage from Hurricane Maria up to \$95 billion dollars, according to *Moody's Analytics*. While President Trump has offered Puerto Rico a loan of \$9.4 billion dollars, the state of New Jersey was granted \$50 billion in emergency federal aid after Hurricane Sandy. But Puerto Rico is a colony.

U.S. army veteran Ricardo Ortiz a patient in the VA Hospital in San Juan warns, "American troops, just like in Haiti a few years ago after the earthquake there, are not here in Puerto Rico to aid the people. They are an imperialist occupying force and no imperialist army can free a colonized nation." Blackwater, the murderous military security firm, is patrolling the streets of San Juan. Ortiz went on to say that barrios in his hometown, Caguas, are self-organizing humanitarian efforts to clean the streets, distribute and share food, drinking water and medicines. The demand should be raised for all U.S. forces, including the private security firm Blackwater, out of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico is run by the Control Board set up by Obama in 2016 under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA). Puerto Ricans on the island didn't vote for this Control Board just as they have no congressional representation or right to vote for president. It is a colony under naked imperialist rule. The ten-day waiver of the Jones Act has ended. It must be extended and Puerto Rico exempted from it.

Yet, blaming the Jones Act is really a diversion. The real capitalist drive is for privatization. That gem is the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), the largest publicly-owned utility in U.S.-controlled territory.

With 90 percent of the electric grid down, the "green" capitalist Elon Musk offered to help rebuild the electric grid (and bulk up his profits). And Governor Rosello, the comprador bourgeois politician, suggested Musk make this his "flagship" project.

Both Democrat and Republican parties support the colonization of Puerto Rico and U.S. imperialist war policies. Their neo-liberal capitalist privatization schemes have, for years, targeted anything public, *i.e.*, schools, prisons, social security. Many leftists oppose privatization of PREPA but support abolition of the Jones Act, which would effectively eliminate U.S. merchant marine jobs as companies would use foreign flag registry to avoid union contracts.

The blame for the lack of transportation and distribution of vital goods lies squarely with the U.S. government and its colonial oppression of Puerto Rico.

Why were leftists silent 25 years ago when the Puerto Rican government-owned Navieras de Puerto Rico, which owned several ships, was privatized and sold to the North American capitalists, Bankers Trust? The ships were later sold to Sea Star Line, a joint venture of Saltchuck (45 percent), Matson (45 percent), and Taino (ten percent), the Puerto Rican "*pitiyanqui*" capitalists. Saltchuck moved aggressively to buy out Matson.

Higher shipping rates on the Puerto Rico run were due, not to the Jones Act *per se*, but to actual price-fixing. In 2008, six executives of Saltchuck's Sea Star Line, Crowley Maritime and Horizon Lines, all involved in the Jones

Act trade of Puerto Rico were sentenced to prison for conspiring to fix ocean freight rates and cargo allocations. They incurred criminal fines, legal expenses and settlements of \$100 million. Now, Saltchuck's Sea Star Lines and Crowley Maritime are each building two new Jones Act containerships for the lucrative Puerto Rico trade.

In 2015, Saltchuck's rush for profit drove its Tote Maritime ship, El Faro, into the eye of Hurricane Joaquin *en route* from Jacksonville to San Juan resulting in the loss of the entire crew of 33. The U.S. Coast Guard, in the pocket of the maritime companies, blamed the hapless captain who went down with his ship and couldn't defend himself.

The downside of the Jones Act

The contradiction in the Jones Act is that while it provided fertile grounds for union organizing, other motivations were national security and protectionism. Two seminal acts during the anti-communist McCarthy period made that clear by introducing toxic policies, one for foreign policy the other domestic. Both opened the floodgates for union-busting runaway flag ships. The anti-Soviet Marshall Plan began the process of transferring U.S. merchant vessels to registration in other countries like Greece, part of a campaign to encircle the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc countries. U.S. financing of anti-communist parties and trade unions was well known in Europe, especially in France and Italy where the left led mass parties of the working class. It's no wonder that charges of Russia interfering in recent American elections are met with laughter and derision in those countries.

The second dose of toxicity was the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, called the slave labor bill by unions. Aside from forcing workers on strike back to work, it banned reds from holding union office and made sympathy strikes illegal, all essential building blocks of the labor

movement. On top of that the Coast Guard screened thousands of maritime workers from ships and ports, branding them communists. Many of them were Black and Brown, including Puerto Ricans and Jamaicans. A couple years before the crew of a merchant ship organized by the Communist-influenced National Maritime Union (NMU) sent President Truman a telegram protesting their transport of French soldiers back to Vietnam to recolonize that country. That was the first U.S. protest against the imperialist war in Vietnam.

The evisceration of the maritime unions was complete when militants of all stripes were purged by union officials-turned-finks like Joe Curran, president of the NMU. What began as a trickle of runaway flagships with foreign registry became a flood. The Jones Act only protected coastwide trade not trade union jobs. But by then the deep sea unions were left defenseless with no militants to organize internationally.

The West Coast ILWU was the only maritime union to remain unscathed by the anti-red terror and became a haven for many who were purged from other unions. It was the only maritime union to have opposed U.S. imperialist wars from the Korean War to the Middle East. On May Day 2008, the longshore union shutdown all West Coast ports to demand an end to the imperialist wars. ILWU even called for Puerto Rican independence and opposed the U.S. using the island of Vieques as a military target practice.

Retired longshoreman Jose Ojeda Jimenez, like his father before him, worked in the port of San Juan. He identifies himself as a proud “*independentista* and *socialista*” who opposes the Jones Act being imposed on Puerto Rico. A member of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Local 1575 he fought within his union for years against a discriminatory practice that denied Puerto Rican locals

equal benefits like the pension and Container Royalty. Those benefits are provided for all longshoremen in the Master Contract, but shamefully not for those in the colony of Puerto Rico. ILA locals, especially the predominantly African American locals in the Southeast and Gulf ports, should demand equal treatment for all longshore union members.

**“American troops,
just like in Haiti a
few years ago after
the earthquake there,
are not here in
Puerto Rico to aid the
people. They are an
imperialist occupying
force and no imperi-
alist army can free a
colonized nation.”**

U.S. stops international humani- tarian aid to Puerto Rico

An offer of teams of doctors and medical aid from Cuba was made to Puerto Rico, but President Trump has denied the humanitarian aid and continues to ramp up the illegal blockade of Cuba. Venezuela President Maduro pledged a “special plan of support and solidarity” assumed to be donated petroleum. That too has been rejected. Why? Venezuela is the majority owner of CITGO, which maintains state-of-the-art refineries in Texas. Russia’s state-owned Rosneft owns 49.9 percent of CITGO and U.S. sanctions against both countries are what sank that offer of aid. Likewise, the Hess Oil refinery on the U.S. territorial island of St. Croix adjacent to Puerto Rico, and

half-owned by the Venezuela government was closed in 2012. At the time it was the largest petroleum refinery in the world. Its shuttering reeks of U.S. imperial designs in the Caribbean.

Hostile relations against Russia, Cuba and Venezuela didn’t start with Trump. The U.S. has attempted to militarily overthrow the government in each of those countries: Russia (U.S. Expeditionary Force 1918-1920), Cuba (Bay of Pigs 1961) and Venezuela (U.S.-backed military *coup* 2002). Vietnam is a big exporter of rice to Cuba. Shipping rice to Puerto Rico would not be in violation of the Jones Act, however it could jeopardize relations with the U.S. that Vietnam had been cultivating through the lead up to the TransPacific Partnership (TPP).

United socialist islands of the Caribbean

Perhaps the arrogant imperial disdain for the plight of the working people of Puerto Rico will stir the cauldron of their desire for freedom and independence. That struggle must transcend the narrow confines of U.S. bourgeois democracy, which even denies that Puerto Rico is a colony while the *comprador* bourgeoisie is besotted with their imperialist American partners. A revolutionary Puerto Rican socialist movement, the embers of which were seen in the celebration of the release of Puerto Rican freedom fighter Oscar Lopez Rivera after 36 years in prison, could rise up with the call for independence and reach out to the working class in the Virgin Islands, Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti and Trinidad and forge a united socialist islands of the Caribbean.

—CounterPunch, October 23, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/23/puerto-rico-and-the-jones-act-conundrum/>

The Genocide of the Rohingya

Big oil, failed democracy and false prophets

BY RAMZY BAROUD

September 14, 2017—To a certain extent, Aung San Suu Kyi is a false prophet. Glorified by the west for many years, she was made a “democracy icon” because she opposed the same forces in her country, Burma, at the time that the U.S.-led western coalition isolated Rangoon for its alliance with China.

Aung San Suu Kyi played her role as expected, winning the approval of the Right and the admiration of the Left. And for that, she won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1991; she joined the elevated group of “The Elders” and was promoted by many in the media and various governments as a heroic figure, to be emulated.

Hillary Clinton once described her as “this extraordinary woman.” The “Lady” of Burma’s journey from being a political pariah in her own country, where she was placed under house arrest for 15 years, finally ended in triumph when she became the leader of Burma following a multi-party election in 2015. Since then, she has toured many countries, dined with queens and presidents, given memorable speeches, received awards, while knowingly rebranding the very brutal military that she had opposed throughout the years. (Even today, the Burmese military has a near-veto power over all aspects of government.)

But the great “humanitarian” seems to have run out of integrity as her government, military and police began conducting a widespread ethnic cleansing operation that targeted the “most oppressed people on earth,” the Rohingya. These defenseless people have been subjected to a brutal and systematic genocide, conducted through a joint effort by the Burmese military, police and majority Buddhist nationalists.

The so-called “Cleansing Operations” have killed hundreds of Rohingya in recent months, driving over 250,000 crying, frightened and hungry people to escape for their lives in any way possible. Hundreds more have perished at sea, or were hunted down and killed in jungles.

...she has toured many countries, dined with queens and presidents, given memorable speeches, received awards, while knowingly rebranding the very brutal military that she had opposed throughout the years

Stories of murder and mayhem remind one of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people during the Nakba of 1948. It should come as no surprise that Israel is one of the biggest suppliers of weapons to the Burmese military. Despite an extended arms embargo on Burma by many countries, Israel’s Defense Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, insists that his country has no intentions of halting its weapons shipments to the despicable regime in Rangoon, which is actively using these weapons against its own minorities, not only Muslims in the western Rakhine state but also Christians in the north.

One of the Israeli shipments was announced in August 2016 by the Israeli company TAR Ideal Concepts. The company proudly featured that its Corner Shot rifles are already in “operational use” by the Burmese military.

Israel’s history is rife with examples of backing brutal juntas and authoritarian regimes, but why are those who have positioned themselves as the guardians of democracy still silent about the bloodbath in Burma?

Nearly a quarter of the Rohingya population has already been driven out of their homes since October last year. The rest could follow in the near future, thus making the collective crime almost irreversible.

Aung San Suu Kyi did not even have the moral courage to say a few words of sympathy to the victims. Instead, she could only express an uncommitted statement: “we have to take care of everybody who is in our country.” Meanwhile, her spokesperson and other mouthpieces launched a campaign of vilification against Rohingya, accusing them of burning their own villages, fabricating their own rape stories, while referring to Rohingya who dare to resist as “Jihadists,” hoping to link the ongoing genocide with the western-infested campaign aimed at vilifying Muslims everywhere.

But well-documented reports give us more than a glimpse of the harrowing reality experienced by the Rohingya. A recent UN report details the account of one woman, whose husband had been killed by soldiers in what the UN described as “widespread as well as systematic” attacks that “very likely commission of crimes against humanity.”

“Five of them took off my clothes and raped me,” said the bereaved woman. “My eight-month-old son was crying of hunger when they were in my house because he wanted to breastfeed, so to silence him they killed him with a knife.”

Fleeing refugees that made it to Bangladesh following a nightmarish journey spoke of the murder of chil-

dren, the rape of women and the burning of villages. Some of these accounts have been verified through satellite images provided by Human Rights Watch, showing wiped out villages throughout the state.

Certainly, the horrible fate of the Rohingya is not entirely new. But what makes it particularly pressing is that the west is now fully on the side of the very government that is carrying out these atrocious acts.

And there is a reason for that: Oil.

Reporting from Ramree Island, Hereward Holland wrote on the “hunting for Myanmar’s (Burma) hidden treasure.”

Massive deposits of oil that have remained untapped due to decades of western boycott of the junta government are now available to the highest bidder. It is a big oil bonanza, and all are invited. Shell, ENI, Total, Chevron and many others are investing large sums to exploit the country’s natural resources, while the Chinese—who dominated Burma’s economy for many years—are being slowly pushed out.

Indeed, the rivalry over Burma’s unexploited wealth is at its peak in decades. It is this wealth—and the need to undermine China’s superpower status in Asia—that has brought the west back, installed Aung San Suu Kyi as a leader in a country that has never fundamentally changed, but only rebranded itself to pave the road for the return of “Big Oil.”

However, the Rohingya are paying the price.

Do not let Burmese official propaganda mislead you. The Rohingya are not foreigners, intruders or immigrants in Burma.

Their kingdom of Arakan dates back to the eighth Century. In the centuries that followed, the inhabitants of that kingdom learned about Islam from Arab traders and, with time, it became a Muslim-majority region.

Arakan is Burma’s modern-day Rakhine state, where most of the country’s estimated 1.2 million Rohingya still live.

The false notion that the Rohingya are outsiders started in 1784 when the Burmese King conquered Arakan and forced hundreds-of-thousands to flee. Many of those who were forced out of their homes to Bengal, eventually returned.

Stories of murder and mayhem remind one of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people during the Nakba of 1948. It should come as no surprise that Israel is one of the biggest suppliers of weapons to the Burmese military.

Attacks on Rohingya, and constant attempts at driving them out of Rakhine, have been renewed over several periods of history, for example: following the Japanese defeat of British forces stationed in Burma in 1942; in 1948; following the takeover of Burma by the Army in 1962; as a result of so-called “Operation Dragon King” in 1977, where the military junta forcefully drove over 200,000 Rohingya out of their homes to Bangladesh, and so on.

In 1982, the military government passed the Citizenship Law that stripped most Rohingya of their citizenship, declaring them illegal in their own country.

The war on the Rohingya began again in 2012. Every single episode, since then, has followed a typical narrative: “communal clashes” between Buddhist nationals and Rohingya, often leading to tens-of-thousands of

the latter group being chased out to the Bay of Bengal, to the jungles and, those who survive, to refugee camps.

Amid international silence, only few respected figures like Pope Francis spoke out in support of the Rohingya in a deeply moving prayer last February.

The Rohingya are “good people,” the Pope said. “They are peaceful people, and they are our brothers and sisters.” His call for justice was never heeded.

Arab and Muslim countries remained largely silent, despite public outcry to do something to end the genocide.

Reporting from Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine, veteran British journalist, Peter Osborne, described what he has seen in an article published by the *Daily Mail* on September 4:

“Just five years ago, an estimated 50,000 of the city’s population of around 180,000 were members of the local Rohingya Muslim ethnic group. Today, there are fewer than 3,000 left. And they are not free to walk the streets. They are crammed into a tiny ghetto surrounded by barbed wire. Armed guards prevent visitors from entering—and will not allow the Rohingya Muslims to leave.”

With access to that reality through their many emissaries on the ground, western governments knew too well of the indisputable facts, but ignored them, anyway.

When U.S., European and Japanese corporations lined up to exploit the treasures of Burma, all they needed was the nod of approval from the U.S. government. The Barack Obama Administration hailed Burma’s “opening” even before the 2015 elections brought Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy to power. After that date, Burma has become another American “success story,” oblivious, of course, to the facts that a genocide has been under way in that country for years.

When Is Genocide Genocide?

Why is the world allowing the Rohingya to be slaughtered?

BY AMAL DE CHICKERA

The violence in Burma is likely to escalate and reach other ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, simply because the two main ethnic and religious groups in these countries are dominated and almost evenly split between Buddhists and Muslims.

The triumphant return of the U.S.-west to exploit Burma's wealth and the U.S.-Chinese rivalries are likely to complicate the situation even further, if ASEAN does not end its appalling silence and move with a determined strategy to pressure Burma to end its genocide of the Rohingya.

People around the world must take a stand. Religious communities should speak out. Human rights groups should do more to document the crimes of the Burmese government and hold to account those who supply them with weapons.

Respected South African Bishop Desmond Tutu had strongly admonished Aung San Suu Kyi for turning a blind eye to the ongoing genocide.

It is the least we expect from the man who stood up to Apartheid in his own country, and penned the famous words: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

Dr. Ramzy Baroud has been writing about the Middle East for over 20 years. He is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author of several books and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story (Pluto Press, London). His website is: ramzybaroud.net

—CounterPunch, September 14, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/09/14/the-genocide-of-the-rohingya-big-oil-failed-democracy-and-false-prophets/>

My heart has broken. Many times, in many ways over the past twenty days. It has been splintered, hammered, shattered, parched, starved and numbed beyond recognition.

As a human rights advocate who has worked on the Rohingya issue for about ten years, I have experienced my fair share of despair in the face of the many atrocities this community has endured. Through my work, I have become familiar with an ever-growing list of violations against them, which have increasingly convinced me that the Rohingya—widely recognized as the most persecuted minority in the world—are the victims of crimes against humanity and genocide. Not a conclusion I arrived at lightly, but one which I have grappled with over time.

Even so, nothing prepared me for the last twenty days.

I lack the vocabulary to process, let alone describe what has been happening in Rakhine state. Such extreme expressions of hatred, bigotry and violence are beyond my comprehension. The thought of being at the receiving end, beyond my imagination.

What words do I know to capture the agony of a two-year-old being burnt alive, her parents forced to watch. Or a teenager gang-raped by a horde of men, just after her father has been shot point blank? How can I even begin to describe the sheer fatigue of a man forced to walk for a week, gunshot wounded, without any food, while carrying his grandmother? Or the all-encompassing loss of a woman—home burnt, family killed, dignity torn to shreds?

Can my imagination be wild enough to understand the courage of a mother who gives birth to her baby while fleeing bloodthirsty *genocidaires*, or the desperation of another whose starving,

traumatized and fatigued body cannot produce breast milk for her infants? What about the nine-year-old child who overnight became the sole protector of her one-year old brother, and had to carry him across borders to safety? Or the disabled man who crawled on all fours for days to escape his persecutors? Or the woman, who within touching distance of the relative safety of Bangladesh, treads on a landmine planted by the Burmese army? What words in what language can describe the sense of betrayal that must be felt by the countless IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) who are starving to death because international humanitarian aid no longer reaches them?

Possibly over 400,000 refugees in twenty days. Twenty-thousand-a-day. Almost a-thousand-an-hour. Each of them scarred, starving, traumatized, hunted, degraded, persecuted, fatigued. Each of them denied their identity, branded liars, systematically persecuted, deemed too ugly to be raped by the Burmese state, its propaganda machine and murderous mobs.

And not for the first time.

The Rohingya have been beaten down, detested, dehumanized, destroyed. Over and over and over and over again.

There is a genocide happening before our eyes. If only we can bear to look.

The Rohingya genocide

The Rohingya genocide didn't begin on August 25, 2017, or September 2016, or even June 2012. It has been steadily going about its business as the world went about its own, for many decades.

Under international law (the UN Genocide Convention and the Rome Statute,) genocide is defined as killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm,

inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction, imposing measures to prevent births or forcibly transferring children of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group with the intention of destroying the group in whole or in part.

For over 40 years, the Burmese state has been engaged in wholesale persecution of the Rohingya; denial and deprivation of their nationality; denial of their history and identity; restrictions on marriage and children; forced malnutrition and forced labor; restrictions on education, healthcare and movement; arbitrary arrests and killings; all with the cumulative intent of denying their participation in society, driving them out and destroying them. This systemic and structured persecution has been interspersed with waves of acute violence carried out by state and non-state actors alike—in 1978, 1991, 2012, 2015; and has been fueled by the most vitriolic propaganda campaign which has brainwashed a country into reviling and fearing the most vulnerable and downtrodden among them.

For too long, the calls of human rights actors have been ignored, dismissed, muted. For too long, other labels have been used so as not to offend. “Inter-communal violence” cried the world in 2012, when the state apparatus lined up with Rakhine extremists to kill, plunder, drive out and displace hundreds-of-thousands of Rohingya: “genocide” and “crimes against humanity” whispered the activists who saw a deathly 40-year-old pattern.

Genocide never happens in isolation, nor is it inevitable. It is denied, enabled, enforced; through lies, complicity, counter-narratives, propaganda, turning a blind eye, weighing human life against economic and geopolitical gain. For genocide to be possible, the right environment has to be carefully cultivated over many years. For it to actually be carried out, the rest of the world has to be too divided, con-

flicted, selfish or indecisive to—even for a short moment in time—come together to protect those under fire. In the Rohingya genocide, we see all these ingredients and more.

Statelessness

The arbitrary denial and deprivation of Rohingya’s Burmese nationality has played a pivotal role in how they are perceived and treated. Rohingya have faced targeted exclusion and persecution at least since the 1970s; but it was the 1982 citizenship law, which entrenched their statelessness. The Rohingya were denied citizenship because they are an unwanted minority. Once made stateless, this was used to reinforce the dominant narrative that they are not from Burma, that they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Their statelessness was drawn on to deny their identity (they are Bengali, there are no Rohingya) and their history. It became the justification for the suffocating restrictions imposed on them. It mattered not, that there was no international law or historical basis for any of this.

The jihadist terrorist narrative

Myanmar justifies its brutalization of the Rohingya, by pointing to the “jihadist,” “terrorist” ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.) It is a convenient narrative that feeds off a wider global Islamophobia. The state—and

particularly the military—is intent on painting the Rohingya as violent extremists for two reasons. First, to attribute state crimes against the Rohingya to the Rohingya themselves. Second, to garner domestic and international support for the terror that the military is unleashing.

The amateurish propaganda footage of the state, of clearly non-Rohingya torch bearers setting houses alight has been dwarfed by the testimony from among the over 400,000 refugees who have fled to Bangladesh, as well as the few reports that have been possible for independent reporters within Rakhine state. There is no doubt that the ARSA are a violent group, though their size and capacity appears to be grossly exaggerated. And while violence is never the answer, it is worth bearing in mind that members of many minority groups, including others in Myanmar, have resorted to armed resistance in the face of much less than has been meted out to the Rohingya over the decades. It is also important to note that ARSA’s public demands have been for equal rights and protection of the Rohingya, an independent UN investigation and accountability for perpetrators.

Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi is increasingly criticized for her position on the Rohingya. However, many of these criticisms still flatter. She is implored



to break her silence. She is called upon to exercise her moral authority to ease the Rohingya pain. She is sympathized with for being in an impossible position. She is given more latitude than a slowly turning oil tanker. Her pedestal may not be as shiny or tall as it used to be, but world powers are still propping it up. She shields their inaction, as she shields army action. The ever-diminishing sense is that things cannot be so bad if she has not spoken out.

There is however, another way of perceiving her. She has not been silent. She has used her voice to stoke hatred against the Rohingya, to ridicule the testimonies of survivors of genocide. To accuse humanitarian actors of colluding with terrorists. To justify the denial of the Rohingya identity. She is only silent in her unwillingness to speak the name “Rohingya.” And so, she no longer has any moral authority to speak of. She is a failed leader, who is watching her country burn, her people turn against their neighbors, her military perpetrate the most unspeakable and atrocious crimes and who has taken a calculated and cynical decision to stand with the oppressors.

The military

These oppressors are first and foremost, the Burmese military, which is led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The testimonies of victims have consistently and repeatedly identified the military as the primary perpetrators. Rakhine mobs have also played a crucial, violent role. But the Burmese military, which still controls the country and which has set itself the objective of finishing its unfinished business from 1942, is the all-powerful hand that is orchestrating the unspeakable violence. Pushing the Rohingya out is not only ideological, it is also economic. Plans for a special economic zone in Maungdaw are already in the public domain. Ownership of burnt land reverts to the state. Natural gas pipelines and the extractive industries

are lucrative beyond belief. The military, stands to profit immensely from its crime against humanity.

Fake news

In the absence of a strong presence of media or independent monitors, accusations of fake news are commonplace. The propaganda front is as important as ever, to whet the appetite for genocide and to deflect and deface any critical attention. The same state, which denied UN investigators entry and does not allow journalists free access to the affected area, is seeking to benefit from the resultant near impossibility to verify testimonies.

All news that exposes its hand is deemed to be fake. The state is also producing its own fake news, forcing those under its control to enact burnings, so the Rohingya can be blamed for committing mass *harakiri*. It is terrifying that despite the sheer weight of evidence, countless Burmese choose to believe the state version, and even international actors do not disregard it completely. And so, legitimacy is being given to the lies that perpetuate genocide.

The international community

This crisis has yet again highlighted the failures of the UN to rise above partisanship, bureaucracy and ineffectiveness, despite the consistent and increasingly louder warnings and pleas of its Human Rights Office.

The international community appears finally, slowly, to be being jostled out of its slumber of complicity and indifference. Too slow to prevent the unimaginable suffering of so many, and it is still unclear if any decisive action will be taken.

It is unthinkable that the Burmese military continues to benefit from arms trade and training from many of the world’s super powers. That even after the genocide began, they were mooted as a viable option to don the blue helmets of UN Peacekeeping forces.

The genocide of the Rohingya has proven without doubt and at great cost, that the world was too hasty to lift sanctions on Myanmar and congratulate it for its democratization gains, while lining up to do trade with the mineral rich country. Such are the times we live in though, that such proof alone isn’t enough to guarantee a stronger, more principled international response.

Amal De Chickera is a co-director of the Institute in Statelessness and Inclusion.

—*Common Dreams*, September 17, 2017

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/09/17/when-genocide-genocide-0>

...genocide is defined as killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction, imposing measures to prevent births or forcibly transferring children of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group with the intention of destroying the group in whole or in part

Britain's "New Politics"

BY JOHN PILGER

Delegates to the recent Labor Party conference in the English seaside town of Brighton seemed not to notice a video playing in the main entrance. The world's third biggest arms manufacturer, BAe Systems, supplier to Saudi Arabia, was promoting its guns, bombs, missiles, naval ships and fighter aircraft.

It seemed a perfidious symbol of a party in which millions of Britons now invest their political hopes. Once the preserve of Tony Blair, it is now led by Jeremy Corbyn, whose career has been very different and is rare in British establishment politics.

Addressing the conference, the campaigner Naomi Klein described the rise of Corbyn as "part of a global phenomenon. We saw it in Bernie Sanders' historic campaign in the U.S. primaries, powered by Millennials who know that safe centrist politics offers them no kind of safe future."

In fact, at the end of the U.S. primary elections last year, Sanders led his followers into the arms of Hillary Clinton, a liberal warmonger from a long tradition in the Democratic Party.

As President Obama's Secretary of State, Clinton presided over the invasion of Libya in 2011, which led to a stampede of refugees to Europe. She gloated at the gruesome murder of Libya's president. Two years earlier, Clinton signed off on a *coup* that overthrew the democratically elected president of Honduras. That she has been invited to Wales on October 14, 2017, to be given an honorary doctorate by the University of Swansea because she is "synonymous with human rights" is unfathomable.

Like Clinton, Sanders is a cold-warrior and "anti-communist" obsessive with a proprietorial view of the world beyond the United States. He supported Bill Clinton's and Tony Blair's illegal

assault on Yugoslavia in 1998 and the invasions of Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, as well as Barack Obama's campaign of terrorism by drone. He backs the provocation of Russia and agrees that the whistleblower Edward Snowden should stand trial. He has called the late Hugo Chavez—a social democrat who won multiple elections—"a dead communist dictator."

While Sanders is a familiar American liberal politician, Corbyn may be a phenomenon, with his indefatigable support for the victims of American and British imperial adventures and for popular resistance movements.

For example, in the 1960s and '70s, the Chagos islanders were expelled from their homeland, a British colony in the Indian Ocean, by a Labor government. An entire population was kidnapped. The aim was to make way for a U.S. military base on the main island of Diego Garcia: a secret deal for which the British were "compensated" with a discount of \$14 million off the price of a Polaris nuclear submarine.

I have had much to do with the Chagos islanders and have filmed them in exile in Mauritius and the Seychelles, where they suffered and some of them "died from sadness," as I was told. They found a political champion in a Labor Member of Parliament, Jeremy Corbyn.

So did the Palestinians. So did Iraqis terrorized by a Labor prime minister's invasion of their country in 2003. So did others struggling to break free from the web of western power. Corbyn supported the likes of Hugo Chavez, who brought more than hope to societies subverted by the U.S. behemoth.

And yet, now Corbyn is closer to power than he might have ever imagined, his foreign policy remains a secret.

By secret, I mean there has been rhetoric and little else. "We must put our values at the heart of our foreign policy," he said at the Labor conference. But what are these "values?"

Since 1945, like the Tories, British Labor has been an imperial party, obsequious to Washington: a record exemplified by the crime in the Chagos islands.



What has changed? Is Corbyn saying Labor will uncouple itself from the U.S. war machine, and the U.S. spying apparatus and U.S. economic blockades that scar humanity?

His shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry, says a Corbyn government “will put human rights back at the heart of Britain’s foreign policy.” But human rights have never been at the heart of British foreign policy—only “interests,” as Lord Palmerston declared in the 19th century: the interests of those at the apex of British society.

Thornberry quoted the late Robin Cook who, as Tony Blair’s first Foreign Secretary in 1997, pledged an “ethical foreign policy” that would “make Britain once again a force for good in the world.”

History is not kind to imperial nostalgia. The recently commemorated division of India by a Labor government in 1947—with a border hurriedly drawn up by a London barrister, Gordon Radcliffe, who had never been to India and never returned—led to blood-letting on a genocidal scale.

“Shut up in a lonely mansion,
with police night and day
Patrolling the gardens to keep the assassins
away, He got down to work,
to the task of settling the fate
Of millions. The maps at his disposal
were out of date And the Census Returns
almost certainly incorrect,
But there was no time to check them,
no time to inspect Contested areas.
The weather was frightfully hot,
And a bout of dysentery kept him
constantly on the trot,
But in seven weeks it was done,
the frontiers decided,
A continent for better or worse divided.”
—W.H. Auden, “Partition.”

It was the same Labor government (1945-51), led by Prime Minister Clement Attlee—“radical” by today’s standards—that dispatched General Douglas Gracey’s British imperial army to Saigon with orders to re-arm the defeated Japanese in order to prevent Vietnamese nationalists from liberat-

ing their own country. Thus, the longest war of the century was ignited.

It was a Labor Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, whose policy of “mutuality” and “partnership” with some of the world’s most vicious despots, especially in the Middle East, forged relationships that endure today, often sidelining and crushing the human rights of whole communities and societies. The cause was British “interests”—oil, power and wealth.

**Today, Britain is the
second biggest arms
dealer on earth, selling
arms and fighter planes,
machine guns and “riot
control” vehicles, to 22
of the 30 countries on
the British
Government’s own list
of human rights
violators.**

In the “radical” 1960s, Labor’s Defense Secretary, Denis Healey, set up the Defense Sales Organization (DSO) specifically to boost the arms trade and make money from selling lethal weapons to the world. Healey told Parliament, “While we attach the highest importance to making progress in the field of arms control and disarmament, we must also take what practical steps we can to ensure that this country does not fail to secure its rightful share of this valuable market.”

The doublethink was quintessentially Labor. When I later asked Healey about this “valuable market,” he claimed his decision made no difference to the volume of military exports. In fact, it led to an almost doubling of Britain’s share of the arms market.

Today, Britain is the second biggest arms dealer on earth, selling arms and fighter planes, machine guns and “riot control” vehicles, to 22 of the 30 countries on the British Government’s own list of human rights violators.

Will this stop under a Corbyn government? The preferred model—Robin Cook’s “ethical foreign policy”—is revealing. Like Jeremy Corbyn, Cook made his name as a backbencher and critic of the arms trade. “Wherever weapons are sold,” wrote Cook, “there is a tacit conspiracy to conceal the reality of war” and “it is a truism that every war for the past two decades has been fought by poor countries with weapons supplied by rich countries.”

Cook singled out the sale of British Hawk fighters to Indonesia as “particularly disturbing.” Indonesia “is not only repressive but actually at war on two fronts: in East Timor, where perhaps a sixth of the population has been slaughtered...and in West Papua, where it confronts an indigenous liberation movement.”

As Foreign Secretary, Cook promised “a thorough review of arms sales.” The then Nobel Peace Laureate, Bishop Carlos Belo of East Timor, appealed directly to Cook: “Please, I beg you, do not sustain any longer a conflict which without these arms sales could never have been pursued in the first place and not for so very long.”

He was referring to Indonesia’s bombing of East Timor with British Hawks and the slaughter of his people with British machine guns. He received no reply.

The following week Cook called journalists to the Foreign Office to announce his “mission statement” for “human rights in a new century.” This PR event included the usual private briefings for selected journalists, including the *BBC*, in which Foreign Office officials lied that there was “no evidence” that British Hawk aircraft were deployed in East Timor.

A few days later, the Foreign Office issued the results of Cook's "thorough review" of arms sales policy. "It was not realistic or practical," wrote Cook, "to revoke licenses which were valid and in force at the time of Labor's election victory." Suharto's Minister for Defense, Edi Sudradjat, said that talks were already under way with Britain for the purchase of 18 more Hawk fighters. "The political change in Britain will not affect our negotiations," he said. He was right.

Today, replace Indonesia with Saudi Arabia and East Timor with Yemen. British military aircraft—sold with the approval of both Tory and Labor governments and built by the firm whose promotional video had pride of place at Labor's 2017 party conference—are bombing the life out of Yemen, one of the most impoverished countries in the world, where half the children are malnourished and there is the greatest cholera epidemic in modern times.

Hospitals and schools, weddings and funerals have been attacked. In Riyadh, British military personnel are reported to be training the Saudis in selecting targets.

In Labor's current manifesto, Jeremy Corbyn and his party colleagues promised that "Labor will demand a comprehensive, independent, UN-led investigation into alleged violations... in Yemen, including air strikes on civilians by the Saudi-led coalition. We will immediately suspend any further arms sales for use in the conflict until that investigation is concluded."

But the evidence of Saudi Arabia's crimes in Yemen is already documented by Amnesty and others, notably by the courageous reporting of the British journalist Iona Craig. The dossier is voluminous.

Labor does not promise to stop arms exports to Saudi Arabia. It does not say Britain will withdraw its support for governments responsible for

the export of Islamist jihadism. There is no commitment to dismantle the arms trade.

The manifesto describes a "special relationship [with the U.S.] based on shared values...When the current Trump administration chooses to ignore them...we will not be afraid to disagree."

As Jeremy Corbyn knows, dealing with the U.S. is not about merely "disagreeing." The U.S. is a rapacious, rogue power that ought not to be regarded as a natural ally of any state championing human rights, irrespective of whether Trump or anyone else is President.

When Emily Thornberry, in her conference speech, linked Venezuela with the Philippines as "increasingly autocratic regimes"—slogans bereft of facts and ignoring the subversive U.S. role in Venezuela—she was consciously playing to the enemy: a tactic with which Jeremy Corbyn will be familiar.

A Corbyn government will allow the Chagos islanders the right of return. But Labor says nothing about renegotiating the 50-year renewal agreement that Britain has just signed with the U.S. allowing it to use the base on Diego Garcia from which it has bombed Afghanistan and Iraq.

A Corbyn government will "immediately recognize the state of Palestine." There is silence on whether Britain will continue to arm Israel, continue to acquiesce in the illegal trade in Israel's illegal "settlements" and treat Israel merely as a warring party, rather than as an historic oppressor given immunity by Washington and London.

On Britain's support for NATO's current war preparations, Labor boasts that the "last Labor government spent above the benchmark of two percent of GDP" on NATO. It says, "Conservative spending cuts have put Britain's security at risk" and promises to boost Britain's military "obligations."

In fact, most of the £40 billion Britain currently spends on the military is not for territorial defense of the UK but for offensive purposes to enhance British "interests" as defined by those who have tried to smear Jeremy Corbyn as unpatriotic.

If the polls are reliable, most Britons are well ahead of their politicians, Tory and Labor. They would accept higher taxes to pay for public services; they want the National Health Service restored to full health. They want decent jobs and wages and housing and schools; they do not hate foreigners but resent exploitative labor. They have no fond memory of an empire on which the sun never set.

They oppose the invasion of other countries and regard Blair as a liar. The rise of Donald Trump has reminded them what a menace the United States can be, especially with their own country in tow.

The Labor Party is the beneficiary of this mood, but many of its pledges—certainly in foreign policy—are qualified and compromised, suggesting, for many Britons, more of the same.

Jeremy Corbyn is widely and properly recognized for his integrity; he opposes the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons; the Labor Party supports it. But he has given shadow cabinet positions to pro-war MPs who support Blairism, tried to get rid of him and abused him as "unelectable."

"We are the political mainstream now," says Corbyn. Yes, but at what price?

—*CounterPunch*, October 6, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/06/the-rising-of-britains-new-politics/>

Major: Battling on Two Fronts

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Major Tillery, for many years known as the jailhouse lawyer who led the 1990 *Tillery v. Owens* prisoners' rights civil case, spawned from unconstitutional conditions at the state prison in Pittsburgh, is still rumbling these days, this time for his life as well as his freedom.

His life, because he recently learned not only that he had hepatitis C, and that it was chronic, but that his condition was so advanced that he now has cirrhosis of the liver!

The news, received recently, caused shock.

The DOC (Department of Corrections), which continues to utilize its unconstitutional protocol to delay treatment, has finally begun to treat Tillery, who has to complete a 12 week daily pill regimen composed of a direct-acting antiviral medication, like Harvoni or Sovaldi.

In his criminal appeals, Major filed a remarkable post-conviction petition, arguing that two state witnesses in his case not only testified falsely, but were granted sex visits with their girlfriends by case detectives, at the Old Roundhouse in

Center City Philadelphia, to seal the deal!

The DA's office response?

That Tillery didn't file a timely petition!

For real.

Major has, of course, appealed.

He continues to rumble today, on two fronts.

—*Prison Radio*, September 17, 2017

Kneeling for Justice

Kaepernick's Demonstration

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

For former San Francisco 49er, Colin Kaepernick, his knee has struck a nerve across America.

Kaepernick, a talented quarterback, decided months ago to take a knee during the national anthem, to bring attention to police terrorism against Black people.

He is paying a steep price for his principled activism and protest, in ways non-athletes can barely conceive. For professional athletes aren't just guys and gals playing a sport for entertainment. Elite athletes, especially at the professional level, have spent much of their lives, even as far back as high or middle school age, to build their bodies to perfect their craft.

This single-minded devotion to a sport creates a focus that few of us ever achieve.

That Kaepernick is sacrificing his professional career, in the face of NFL hostility, speaks well of the man. His sustained protest brings to mind the antiwar efforts of the late Muhammad Ali, who because his license to box was taken, was denied the ability to perform his craft when he was at the top of his game. He lost, yes; but so did his millions of fans.

Similarly, track and field athletes John Carlos and Tommie Smith ran and won their races at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico. Smith and Carlos were subjected to years of repression and discrimination after they raised their fist in Black Power salutes during the medal ceremonies.

Colin Kaepernick follows in that proud and principled tradition, for, by taking a knee, he is standing for justice for millions, whose voices can't be heard.

—*Prison Radio*, September 24, 2017

Write to:

Mumia Abu-Jamal AM-8335

SCI-Mahanoy

301 Morea Road

Frackville, PA 17932



Puerto Rico—A Colony by Any Name

BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

On Christopher Columbus's second voyage to what was called the West Indies, he visited Puerto Rico, called Boriquen by the native Arawaks dwelling on the island.

Columbus docked in November 1493, and with him came the force and greed of the Spanish Empire. For four centuries Spain brought imperial exploitation, slavery, repression and death to the Arawak and in its place arose a new people: the mixture of southern Europeans (Spain), the remnant of Indians, and Africans.

After the U.S. pushed a weakened Spain out of Cuba, it seized Puerto Rico as well.

From that seizure in 1898 by the U.S. until today, Puerto Rico has been an American property, under the U.S. government's thumb.

Did you know that Puerto Ricans can't vote for president? That they, on the island, can't vote in general elections?

They fight in every American war—and die in every conflict.

When U.S. businesses open up shop in Puerto Rico, they are exempt from taxes, money that could aid the island in its health and educational needs.

And just days ago, after being lashed by nature's fury as Hurricane Maria, when they dared complain about slow

American response, the moronic U.S. president called Puerto Ricans "ingrates"—"Ingrates!"

Now, weeks later, they are still suffering—no water, no food, no power.

They are Americans in name, but in fact they are colonial subjects of the U.S. Empire.

Used by America, and then forgotten.

—*Prison Radio*, October 2017

Herman Bell Under Attack

Weeks after guards attacked him, political prisoner Herman Bell is being denied family visits

BY KIHANA MIRAYA ROSS, INTRODUCTION BY AKIBA SOLOMON

Herman Bell, a 69-year old political prisoner, has been imprisoned since 1973 for the killing of two New York City police officers. Bell, who was a member of the Black Panther Party at that time, pled not guilty at trial and stated that witness coercion and prosecutorial misconduct led to his conviction.

On September 5, he suffered an unprovoked assault by up to six guards at the Great Meadow Correctional Facility in Comstock, New York. According to Bell, guards punched him in the face, slammed his head into the concrete floor three times, pepper-sprayed him in his face and mouth, and kned him in the rib cage. He sustained two broken ribs. Three weeks after the attack, his vision remains blurry and he suffers from headaches and dizziness.

Bell, who has not had a disciplinary infraction for over 20 years, was charged with assaulting prison staff and has been placed in solitary confinement without

sufficient medical treatment. Advocates are calling for Bell to receive adequate medical care, to have the disciplinary charges against him dropped, to be returned to general population, for the officers who assaulted him to be fired and for the reinstatement of family visits. Bell had been scheduled to begin a three-day visit with his wife around the time of the beating. It would have been their first in over two-and-a-half years. Here, Bell's daughter-in-law, kihana miraya ross, reflects on how vital visits are for both Bell and their family.

Herman Bell is the best man. Yes, he is a political prisoner. He is an activist. He is a tireless soldier in the fight for justice. He is all of those things. But he is also a husband. He is a father. He is a grandfather. He is my children's grandfather—a grandfather they have only had the opportunity to spend time with in prison visiting rooms.

When the girls were young, they would wait anxiously in the Eastern Correctional Facility visiting room for their "gandpa," as they used to call him, to come out. As soon as they would see him, they would try to dart over to him, fighting for lap time. I would literally have to hold them back because Herman had to check in at the desk before he could sit down with us. As soon as he came over, I would sneak in my hug while the girls were tethered to his legs. When he would sit down, he would prop both girls on his knees and talk to them about what was going on in their world—allowing them to establish some sense of normalcy in their relationship. Where kids on the outside might ask their grandpa for an ice cream cone, the girls would request something sweet from the vending machine. He would always oblige.

As the girls have gotten older, their grandpa has moved prisons. At

Comstock, the prison where he recently suffered an unprovoked assault by multiple guards, the visiting rooms are constructed in such a way that there is always a two-and-a-half to three-foot table between visitors and prisoners. We have to reach over the table to attempt hugs and kisses—never quite being able to embrace completely.

Even so, as young women ages 12 and 16, my daughters still eagerly wait for their grandpa to come out. As soon as Herman sits down, Sage goes and gets a bunch of napkins and a pencil. She begins drawing little lines for the game formerly known as hangman. Simone, quite the budding feminist, tells a story that exemplifies patriarchy to get her grandpa's reaction, preparing to lovingly school him if necessary. They talk about their classes, friends and extra-curricular activities. And then, as if they are toddlers again, my daughters ask their grandpa if they can get something sweet from the vending machine.

We live thousands of miles away from Comstock; seeing Herman is only possible through the support of the Rosenberg Fund for Children's Attica Prison Visit program. So in those long stretches between visits, there are the phone calls. Calls are where Herman finds out about the trees we've planted and the houseplants we're nursing. When I first moved into my new house, Herman asked me to walk him through the layout, to tell him where we built the bookshelves and where the plants live. It was our way of having him over—of showing him our "new digs" as he called it. We paint pictures of our lives for him so that he has something tangible to hold on to in his world. We talk of not "if" but "when" he gets out. We talk of buying a big house and living together as a family—of porches in the summer and Jack Daniels-spiked lemonades. That's how we hold on until our next visit.

My favorite times with Herman are when he's in the mood to tell stories.

He never asks, "Do you want to hear a story?" Rather, he suddenly transports the girls and me from the bleak visiting room to a summer in Mississippi or a rainy San Francisco day. Herman's stories don't really have a beginning or an end. We just somehow find ourselves inside them until I notice Herman glancing at the clock. Then we are back in the visiting room, and it's nearing three o'clock, and we're figuring out how to squeeze in the last little bits of everything before it's time to say goodbye. Then there's the lump in my throat. My daughters squeezing hands under the table. Me whispering to them, "Wait," so that they remember not to cry until grandpa can't see us anymore.

Then the guards yell, "Visiting is over." Despite the barrier of the table, we hug. We hug again. We begin that goodbye, where he goes one way and we go the other. He turns around to wave again. We wave. We blow kisses. I throw up a power fist and he throws it right back. We get one last glance and then he's gone. The iron door shuts and the tears push their way down our cheeks.

Update from Herman Bell

Thanks to a lot of work by a lot of us, Herman Bell has been transferred to general population in Shawangunk C.F.

Herman was also informed that the charges against him are being dropped. You can write Herman at the new address (bottom of the message).

Before Herman got the news he sent the following message to us:

September 27, 2017

My dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you for the outpouring of cards, letters, healing-love and energy that you sent me in response to the unprovoked brutal assault on me by New York State prison guards at Comstock, New York—a vicious slap aside the head from behind and shoved to the ground. I protected myself as best as I could. I sustained multiple kicks,

punches to the face and eyes, repeated head slams into concrete, and two cracked ribs. They tried to bury me with raining blows, not knowing that I am a seed. But the burning pepper spray sprayed into my eyes and mouth is what did me in—and yet, here I am.

Now I know why visitors bring flowers and candy to the hospital. I was immediately sent, however, not to a hospital but to the Box for "assault on staff," so the cards and letters and love you sent me were my flowers and candy. You did great! I was astonished, not by the outpouring of your support, but by the enormity of it.

People are coming together and are standing up. They are finding that they are not entitled to the rights and freedoms they think they have as Americans. Instead of the consideration Americans—many of them voters—deserve; they are ignored by authoritarian and elected officials. They lack healthcare, suffer from unrestrained police violence, mass incarceration, lack a living wage, experience poverty and homelessness, and suffer from a toxic environment. People are standing up against these injustices, insisting that their demands be respected and addressed. The social injustice, jackboot repression, racist attacks, discrimination, wealth disparities, unemployment, lack of affordable housing (the list doesn't just end there), creates waves of fierce discontent which are gaining steady momentum, becoming a full-blown cleansing tsunami, the force of which is irresistible.

And that force is you, the People, coming together and taking a stand. My flowers and candy is your outpouring of support for me, our political prisoners, the mass incarcerated and the voiceless.

To write each of you (I've literally received hundreds of letters) a personal "thank you" at this time would be impossible. So, I send this "thank you!" instead.

Continued on page 59

Confederate Monuments Celebrate Yesterday's Slavery and Racism, U.S. Prisons Practice Slavery and Racism Today (2017)

BY KEVIN "RASHID" JOHNSON

Assailing slavery and white supremacy today

On August 11, white supremacists rallied in Charlottesville, Virginia against the removal of the statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee. In the wake of that rally, which turned deadly when a rally-goer plowed his car into a group of counter-demonstrators, killing one and injuring 19 others, there have been calls across Amerika to remove Confederate monuments.

Those monuments—over 1500 of them—are being assailed because most were erected between the 1890s and 1920s—decades after the Civil War—not to honor the war dead, but rather to celebrate the reassertion of white supremacy across the South and the defeat of Reconstruction.

The mainstream media has closely covered these events and politicians who have been going on record with token renunciations of America's past

Continued from page 58

Thank you! I thank you deeply one and all for the empathy, outrage, love and support you've expressed in the face of the assault on me. May our resolve to produce social change remain unshakeable.

Herman

—*Color Lines*, September 29, 2017

<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/weeks-after-guards-attacked-him-political-prisoner-herman-bell-being-denied-family-visits>

Write to:

Herman Bell #79C-0262

Shawangunk C.F.

P.O. Box 700

Wallkill, NY 12589-0700

practices of white supremacy and slavery. However, both the media and political class have remained totally silent about the systemic practice of both slavery and racism by the U.S. government today as a core feature of its so-called criminal justice system, and the growing protest movement against it.

Actually the Charlottesville events happened just a week before August 19, the date of the planned mass rally in Washington DC against mass imprisonment. This rally and the growing movement of which it is part, are aimed at dismantling not merely symbols of past racism and slavery like Confederate monuments, but the 13th Amendment which still authorizes slavery today and is directed predominantly against people of color.

The public is only just realizing

But who questions the legitimacy of imprisonment in Amerika? It's supposed to be about removing from society and rehabilitating those who have been duly convicted of crimes, right? Not hardly.

From the Black Codes enacted across the South immediately after the Civil War, to today's drug war and "law and order" agendas, criminal convictions enabled by the 13th Amendment, have been targeted predominantly and consciously at people of color—New Afrikans/Blacks in particular—to reproduce slavery.

This systemic racism and injustice has only recently begun to come to public attention. This began in part when the legal insider, past U.S. Supreme Court law clerk and civil rights attorney Michelle Alexander, published her expose, *The New Jim Crow*,¹ in 2010, which revealed the methods by which the criminal justice

system deliberately targets people of color for mass imprisonment and insulates itself from challenge.

Then came struggles launched by prisoners themselves against the systemic abuses of U.S. imprisonment, like the three historic hunger strikes led by California's prisoners in 2011 and 2013, in which 6,000, 12,000, and 30,000 prisoners respectively participated. This effort brought international attention and opposition to the widespread use of the known psychological torture of solitary confinement.

Further collective acts of resistance followed, drawing more public awareness and support, including two prisoner-initiated work strikes; first in Texas in April 2016, then a nationwide strike in which tens-of-thousands of prisoners across Amerika participated beginning on September 9, 2016—a date chosen to commemorate the 1971 Attica prison uprising.

These work strikes succeeded in exposing the existence of antebellum-style slavery in U.S. prisons. A condition long-concealed by the media and prisoncrats, while U.S. officials have long denounced human trafficking and slavery in other countries. Furthermore, the U.S. wrote and ratified Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the end of World War II, which outlaws all forms of slavery—typical U.S. hypocrisy.

These exposures and prisoners' resistance struggles engendered the budding outside movement against the abuses and slavery of U.S. mass imprisonment.

The documentary film *13th* by Ava Duvernay pinpointed the 13th Amendment as the 1865 Constitutional law that modified, but did not abolish, slavery. It only changed slavery from a status based exclusively on race to one

imposed upon conviction of crimes. But the passage of the 13th Amendment did not end the racialized character of U.S. slavery. Instead, criminal laws were created and selectively enforced to target Blacks in particular.

Slaves of the State

At base, the 13th Amendment served to give the power to own and regulate slavery to the government instead of private persons, which made the condition more deadly for the enslaved than under private ownership. As Karl Marx observed, when slaves can be readily replenished from a relatively inexhaustible human pool, they are typically worked to death.

This is what the state did with convict slaves who were put to work on chain gangs, prison plantations, and most notoriously, leased out to private plantations and corporations.

The Southern *versus* Northern prison model

Texas led in implementing and expanding the convict slave model, which, like chattel slavery, has relied on retribution and brutality as the only viable method of enforcement. This model, which many Southern states followed, came to be known as the Southern prison model.

In parallel, a Northern prison model also arose, which had its birth in Pennsylvania's Eastern State Penitentiary. This system, under the influence of Quakers, devised as a "humane" approach to imprisonment, the use of solitary confinement to rehabilitate prisoners as penance for their wrongs, (hence the name "penitentiary.")

However, the sensory deprivation of the Northern model proved no less inhumane than the Southern model, and led to public opposition. Charles Dickens visited the penitentiary and wrote that the system was "cruel and wrong." He observed that, "in its intention...it is kind, humane, and meant for reformation," but "I believe that

very few men are capable of estimating the immense amount of torture and agony which this dreadful punishment, prolonged for years, inflicts upon its sufferers." He concluded, "I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body."²

In 1890, the Supreme Court found the Northern model's solitary confinement to be unconstitutionally cruel and unusual. In reaching this conclusion the court found its suffering torturous; that under it:

"A considerable number of prisoners fell, after even a short confinement, into a semi-fatuous condition, from which it was next to impossible to arouse them, and others became violently insane; others, still, committed suicide; while those who stood the ordeal better were not generally reformed, and in most cases did not recover sufficient mental activity to be of any subsequent service to the community."³

Regardless of this ruling, the use of solitary confinement continued, and spread at an unprecedented level during the post-1970s prison boom, which saw the construction of super maximum-security prisons and segregation units across the U.S. Today over 80,000 prisoners in America are held in solitary confinement.

The Southern prison model, although more openly brutal than the Northern model, has received much less public exposure. The convict leasing system, for example, proved particularly barbaric. While the number of Blacks lynched in the South from 1880 to 1930 are numbered by the Tuskegee Institute at 3,220, the number that died during the same period from the abuses of convict leasing were over 30,000.

The convict leasing system rivaled the German Nazi slave-labor camps in cruelty and fatalities. As Robert Perkinson observed of just the Texas system:

"Recorded mortality rates in excess of 20 percent, in some instanc-

es, put U.S. Steel on par with German and Japanese companies that profited from slave labor in World War II. But while those corporations have been held to account, U.S. Steel has escaped unscathed. Although the *Wall Street Journal* recently probed the company's shameful history, no reparations movement has emerged among former convicts or their descendants."⁴

U.S. officials and the media have generally concealed the routine practice of brutality and slavery in American prisons. When they do talk about U.S. prisons and their functions, they are typically portrayed in idealistic terms drawn from the Northern model as institutions of rehabilitation and humane treatment, rather than as places of horrific abuse, mental retribution, and slave labor modeled on the old Southern slave plantations.

Although aspects of both the Northern and Southern models co-exist in U.S. prisons, the Southern model has come to dominate. Here's Perkinson again:

"[Texas prisons present] a uniquely harsh model of criminal justice, a regime of state-sanctioned punishment based on roughshod legal proceedings, racial subjugation, corporal punishment, and unpaid field labor that has persevered into the 21st Century. Texas's plantations are 'probably the best example of slavery remaining in the country,' reported a national corrections expert in 1978. Twenty years later, when I first started visiting southern prisons, I reached the same conclusion. Nowhere else in turn-of-the-millennium America, could one witness gangs of African American men filling cotton sacks under the watchful eyes of armed whites on horseback. Plantation prisons at Sugar Land, Huntsville, and elsewhere have preserved the lifeways of slavery in carceral amber.

"For most of American history, Texas's implacable punishment traditions relegated it to the margins of

penology, a field devoted—in theory if not practice—to the ‘moral regeneration...of criminals.’ In the late civil rights era, however, as rehabilitation programs faltered, crime rates soared, and a new breed of politician discovered that crime, especially Black crime, galvanized white voters. Texas’s Lone Star became a guiding light. State after state began copying elements of what prison experts called the ‘Texas control model,’ while politicians looked with new fondness on the state’s severe sentencing statutes. Once dismissed as a ‘disgrace of Christian civilization,’ Texas became the template for a more fearful and vengeful society.”⁵

The racial divide

During the 1800s and early 1900s, when racism was openly practiced, the Northern Model concept of “humane” and “rehabilitative” prisons was reserved for white prisoners, while the southern model of brutal retribution and slavery was for Blacks and Mexicans.

In my experience, having been imprisoned in the majority white “Northern” prison system of Oregon from 2012-2013, and then in the majority Black and Mexican/Chicano “Southern” Texas and Florida prison systems from 2013 to the present, I’ve seen these models still applied along the same racialized lines.

In Oregon, prisoners are not forced to work, although those who do work are paid only pennies-per-hour. Oregon also emphasizes rehabilitation through a range of privileges and programs, while using particularly severe solitary confinement as discipline and segregation.

Texas, however, compels all its prisoners, except those with medical or mental health exemptions, to work—and without any pay. Many work on chain gangs or antebellum-style plantations where they plow, plant, tend and harvest a wide variety of crops, including cotton, using no tools except dull, primitive hand-held hoes. Extreme physical abuse by guards is the

norm, so much so that the Texas federal courts have found a long-standing “culture of sadistic violence that... pervade[s] the Texas prison system” stemming from “the seeming inability of Correctional officers to ‘keep their hands off prisoners’.”⁶

This abusive culture is then supplemented by a severe system of solitary confinement that the courts characterized as “virtual incubators of psychoses—seeding illness in otherwise healthy inmates and exacerbating illness in those already suffering from mental infirmities.”⁷

Florida, a notorious Texas wannabe, also forces its prisoners to work, most without any pay. Physical abuse, especially frequent violent killings of prisoners by guards, is probably worse than in Texas. In only two months of confinement in Florida’s prison system, I have talked to scores of prisoners, most who’ve been confined in the Florida Department of Correction (FDC) for a decade or more, who have witnessed guards murder at least one prisoner, usually by group beatings and/or staged suicides (in effect, lynchings).⁸

I have also had ranking FDC guards and even mental health staff boast, or admit knowledge, of such killings. In fact I was confronted on my first day in the FDC by a mob of guards making death threats against me.

FDC also imposes a particularly severe system of solitary confinement in its disciplinary and segregation (or “close management”) units, where prisoners are compelled to remain absolutely silent inside their cells under threat of disciplinary infractions; strip cells (being left in a completely empty cell for a minimum of 72 hours with nothing but a pair of boxers), and physical assault with gas, up to a cell raid by an armored team of guards.

In my brief FDC confinement in solitary, I have witnessed all of these measures (except cell raids) used against prisoners repeatedly, simply for

talking. I have been threatened with them numerous times for talking also.

It has been long recognized that extreme abuse is the only way prisoners can be compelled to remain absolutely silent. The experiment was tried in New York prisons in the 1800s, as in Pennsylvania. Although the two Northern systems differed in certain respects, New York’s was more extreme, and unworkable, in attempting to enforce absolute silence.

“Whatever their differences, the New York and Pennsylvania systems proved foundational not only as blueprints of penitential discipline, but for the failures they produced. With their strict prohibitions, New York’s prisons were especially prone to disorder. Silence, managers discovered, could only be maintained by force. Whipping is ‘very frequent, and the least fault is punished with its application,’ noted Beaumont and Tocqueville.”⁹

In this context, the extreme abuse and killings of Florida prisoners by guards is inevitable.

Modern slavery nothing new

Today’s U.S. mass imprisonment is no more legitimate than, and is just as scandalous as, the old trans-Atlantic slave trade and in many respects they are analogous.

The old system saw millions of Afrikans hunted, kidnapped and transported in the holds of ships to be enslaved in the Americas. A process, which caused Afrika to suffer, just as with Black communities today under mass incarceration, massive depopulation and social destabilization.

Police operate much like the slave catchers. The judges, prosecutors and court appointed “defense” attorneys operate as the slave auctioneers and traders, who keep the inexhaustible supply of human bodies cycling into Amerika’s slave camps. The jails and sheriffs operate as the slaveholders who confine the slaves until they are “sold.”

Once sold, the prison guards and administrators are the overseers. As for who the “owners” are—the U.S. Supreme Court made this clear in its 1871 ruling of *Ruffin v. Commonwealth*, where it held that prisoners are “slaves of the state.” As said, this is the only change that the 13th Amendment made to slavery—the state instead of private persons became the owner and regulator of slaves. All that is required today to “sell” one into slavery is the technical “conviction” of a crime. A process that is as vile and arbitrary as are the conditions under which prisoners are held.

In a 2016 article in *Prison Legal News* magazine, Chris Hedges exposed the downright corrupt method by which the vast majority of U.S. prisoners are “convicted” of crimes. Rather than being tried and convicted by a jury of one’s peers as the Constitution assures every person charged with a serious crime, 97 percent of federal convictions and 95 percent of state felony convictions are produced by the accused being coerced and threatened by court-appointed defense attorneys, working in collaboration with prosecutors and judges, into pleading guilty. A process euphemistically called “plea bargains,” “plea negotiations,” etc. In most cases, the prosecutors lack sufficient evidence—or any evidence at all—to convict the accused. But because the accused can’t afford to hire an attorney who will genuinely fight for them as the laws require, millions are cycled into U.S. prisons and reduced to slavery.

Abolish slavery

At every level and stage the U.S. criminal (in)justice system is illegitimate and but a continuation of the long train of evils that Amerika was founded and built on: Native genocide, land theft, slavery, racism, systemic poverty, a campaign of continental conquest—all the same aspirations and methods of the German Nazis for which they are universally reviled. But only because unlike Amerika—

from whom the Third Reich drew its inspiration—the Nazis failed.

Like the monuments on display across Amerika, such as those of Confederate general and Ku Klux Klan founder Nathan Bedford Forrest, who regained his fortune after the Civil War using convict labor, slavery today in the 13th Amendment must be dismantled and relegated to the museums where their full and true histories should be taught.

Although the call to amend the 13th Amendment has only just begun to resonate with those in society, this has been a founding proposal of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party. In 2006 we wrote:

“The mostly Black, Hispanic and Native American prison populations [in Amerika] are ground down by cruel and unusual punishment while being denied a political voice and basic human rights and dignity, and are subjected to exploitation by the multinational corporations as a cheap labor force. This has nothing to do with rehabilitation. You can’t teach citizenship through slavery!”

“To put an end to this cruelest of oppressions and violation of the inalienable rights of the people, we call for the immediate amendment of the 13th amendment to end slavery for all, and the extension of universal suffrage to all, including prisoners. We declare all elections not based upon full universal suffrage to be invalid, and powers not derived from the consent of the governed to be usurpations.”¹⁰

Many prisoners embraced this call and it is now being taken up by the general public, who are slowly awakening to the reality that slavery and its targeting of people of color and the poor is still in wide practice in Amerika.

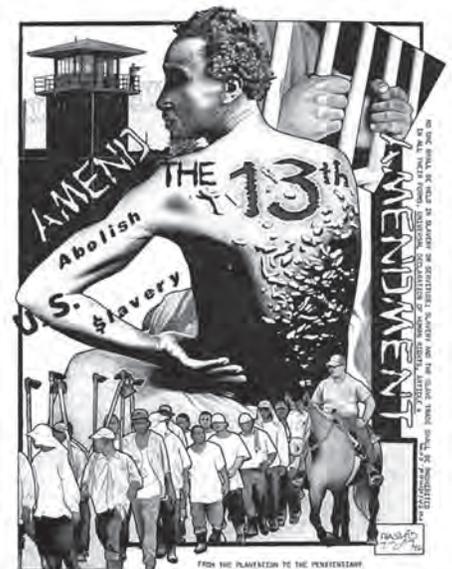
It is as evil an institution today as it was 152 years ago when it was portrayed as having been abolished, but wasn’t. Instead, it was enshrined in the 13th Amendment and continued as a hidden practice behind walls of con-

crete, steel and razor wire, where the public could not see. We must build and continue the struggle until this “peculiar institution” has been completely abolished.

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win!

All Power to the People!

- 1 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration and the Age of Color Blindness* (N.Y.: The New Press, 2010/2013)
- 2 Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (Greenwich Connecticut: Fawcett, 1961) pp. 112-13
- 3 *Ex Parte Medley*, 134 US 160, 168 (1890)
- 4 Robert Perkinson, *Texas Tough: The Rise of America’s Prison Empire* (New York: Metropolitan, 2010)
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ruiz v. Johnson*, 154 F. Supp. 2d 975, 987-88 (S.D. Tex. 2001)
- 7 *Ibid.* at p. 984
- 8 The FDC has been repeatedly featured in the media concerning questionable prisoner deaths and in 2014 was cited for a record number of deaths. See, for example, Greg Allen, “Record Number of Inmate Deaths Has Florida Prisons on the Defensive,” *All Things Considered*, (*National Public Radio*, March 18, 2015, 5:56 PM ET).
- 9 *Op cit*, note 4, quoting Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville, *On the Penitentiary System in the United States and Its Application in France*, trans. Francis Lieber (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blachard, 1833), p. 73
- 10 Kevin “Rashid” Johnson, “A Modest Proposal for the Abolition of Slavery in the 21st Century.” (2002), *Rashidmod.com*



Why is Jeremiah Tatum in Florida's Solitary Confinement?

BY KEVIN RASHID JOHNSON

You've likely never heard of Jeremiah Tatum or "JT." We met here in Florida State Prison's (FSP) solitary confinement or Close Management (CM) unit.

He is an outspoken opponent of the abuse by prison officials, a tendency which officials find intolerable. In fact, this tendency led to a series of abuses that landed JT in solitary for several years, where he's been abused even further.

Abuse like JT's are commonplace, but his case stands out because it is well-documented and his mistreatment continues although he was exonerated of wrongdoing.

Not only should the widespread use of solitary confinement in American prisons, (which is known torture and is directed in particular against people of color and the poor,) be invoked as one of many prevalent human rights abuses committed by U.S. officials, but JT's situation should be pointed out by readers whenever they hear U.S. officials self-righteously condemn the objectionable human rights records of countries they dislike.

Guards lie to justify assault

JT entered the Florida Department of Correction (FDC) on April 16, 2014. He was assigned to the Northwest Florida Reception Center. While there he witnessed a climate where guards terrorized prisoners, especially Blacks and Latinos.

Physical abuse was meted out with such open impunity that many prisoners were reluctant to leave their cells, even to go to meals. This because, for example, while walking to the chow hall, prisoners were randomly pulled aside by groups of guards demanding to know why their hair wasn't perfectly groomed, or under some other arbitrary, often invented or exaggerated

pretext or petty rule violation. The targeted prisoners were then brutally beaten and gassed in full view of others.

On August 5, 2014, a captain James Kirkland targeted several newly arrived prisoners who had no property. He made up a lie that they each were using their personal property to block their cell doors, to speciously justify gassing them inside their cells.

JT witnessed and spoke out against this abuse. In turn Kirkland had him gassed too and a disciplinary report (DR) fabricated as justification, claiming that JT had reached out of his cell door and struck a sergeant, then attempted to grab Kirkland, while they were involved in the other uses of force.

According to FDC protocol on use of gas, JT had to be brought out of his cell and taken to a shower to be decontaminated. But Kirkland had further abuse in store for him.

He conspired with the guards who were to escort JT to the shower in handcuffs and leg shackles, to act like he spit on them and thereupon to slam him face first to the floor and jump on him. Since guards commit and get away with this sort of abuse as everyday business, they did this although a portable audio-video camera was trained on JT the entire time.

JT attacked while under FDC scrutiny

Coincidentally, JT's abuse happened just when FDC was under public scrutiny because of media reports of extensive abuses and killings of prisoners and cover-ups by FDC officials. These reports were prompted by complaints of the aggrieved family members.

As a result, the FDC Secretary, Mike Crews, initiated damage control measures of selectively disciplining and investigating guards, resulting in a

handful of prosecutions for minor abuse crimes. The six guards who set JT up got caught up in this campaign to repair the FDC's and Crews's public image. As Florida's *Times-Union* newspaper reported on September 13, 2014:

"Authorities arrested five prison guards for allegedly stomping on a handcuffed and shackled inmate at the Northwest Florida Prison last month and a sixth—a captain—also is charged with taking part in the attack and lying about it...."

"The Wednesday arrests came less than a month after Department of Corrections Secretary Mike Crews initiated a statewide house-cleaning prompted by news reports that officials had covered up the deaths of at least two inmates and amid accusations of wide-spread brutality within the prison system...."

"According to the affidavits about the August 5 incident at the Chipley institution, the five prison workers were taking inmate Jeremiah Tatum, 31, to the cold-water shower after he had been gassed with chemical agents...."

"In sworn statements to inspectors, four of the guards said that Kirkland told them he 'wanted Tatum taken to the ground' as the inmate was led to the decontamination shower shortly before 11:00 P.M."

"Captain Kirkland would make an audible noise and/or state that Inmate Tatum spit on him. The escorting officers were to then force Tatum to the ground,' the complaint reads. All five later said that Tatum never spit on anyone...."

With the exposure and arrest of the guards for their assault and fabrications against JT, the falsified DR against him was overturned. But none of this was done out of justice to him or otherwise.

As noted, it was part of a pretentious campaign to make it appear to

the public that FDC officials were being held accountable for abusive and murderous misconduct, which is anything but true. As Randall Berg, the executive director of the Florida Justice Institute, stated of Mike Crews's damage control gestures: "The culture hasn't changed.... Department leaders have for too long ignored a multi-generational pattern of abuse...."

Clearly the culture hasn't changed

FDC administrators at the highest levels have made sure that JT remained in solitary for years after he was absolved of all wrongdoing, and it was

proven that the guards who had him put in solitary lied and jumped on him.

On top of this, because of the firings, prosecutions and criminal convictions of those guards, JT has been retaliated against by other guards while in solitary. First he was denied numerous meals (literally starved) in solitary at Santa Rosa Correctional Institution; then he was jumped on again several times by guards here at FSP.

If JT's case isn't evidence of the fascist nature and fundamental corruption of Amerika and its criminal injustice system, why is he still in solitary confinement?

Dare to struggle, Dare to win!

All power to the people!

Kevin Rashid Johnson's writings and artwork have been widely circulated. He is the author of, Panther Vision: Essential Party Writings and Art of Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, Minister of Defense, New Afrikan Black Panther Party, (Kersplebedeb, 2010).

Write or email:

Kevin Johnson, #158039

Florida State Prison

P.O. Box 800

Raiford, FL 32083

krj.nabpppc@gmail.com

www.rashidmod.com

ENVIRONMENT

Hurricanes, Global Warming, Environmental Racism and Anti-Immigrant Laws

BY BARRY SHEPPARD

September 8, 2017—The huge devastation, death and misery that Hurricane Harvey wreaked upon Texas and Louisiana has been seen around the world.

Meanwhile, fresh havoc is being wreaked upon the Caribbean and the U.S.'s south-east by hurricane Irma. In less reported news, more than 1400 people have been killed in recent weeks by horrific flooding in South Asia. The consequences of such disasters caused by extreme weather reveal the intersection of crises caused by the capitalist system.

Coverage of Harvey has centered on Houston, the fourth-largest city in the U.S., which suffered the greatest rainfall amount in the country's recorded history over several days.

The result was huge flooding everywhere in the city and its environs, in much of Texas and western Louisiana, and continuing as Harvey moved north. At least 63 people have died in the unprecedented flooding.

The damage caused by the storm is staggering. More than 40,000 homes have been lost and as many as one-million cars destroyed.

The body of Alonso Guillen, a volunteer rescuer, was found on September 1, after he disappeared two days before when his boat capsized. He was also an undocumented immigrant and a beneficiary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program—which Donald Trump's administration has just cancelled.

Guillen's mother told the *Houston Chronicle* she tried to come from Mexico to the U.S. to bury her son but was turned away by Border Patrol agents.

Climate denial

In the face of hurricane-caused disasters, the media avoided any discussion of the elephant in the room: global warming.

It is not only Republican politicians, most of whom are climate change

deniers, who have failed to raise the issue. The Democrats, who often talk about it but do little, are also silent.

Media talking heads say now is not the time to inject "politics" into this national disaster by talking about global warming. By this silence they take a political stand with Trump and the rest of the climate change deniers, including ultra-rightist Texas governor Greg Abbott.

Hard on the heels of Harvey, Irma, with 300-kilometers-per-hour winds, is one of the most powerful Atlantic storms ever. This is "just the weather," says Trump.

Global warming, caused largely by burning fossil fuels, has made storms far more powerful and destructive, as huge amounts of scientific data in the last decades has proven.

South Asia

This threatens the whole world. In South Asia, seasonal monsoon rains have become especially destructive.

Torrential rains have caused huge flooding.

According to the United Nations, at least 41 million people in Bangladesh, India and Nepal have been affected by flooding and landslides. There have been 1400 deaths reported, a likely low number in the affected areas, with poor infrastructure and government services.

In Bangladesh, one third of the country is under water. Asad Rehman, Executive Director of War on Want, who has worked on climate issues in the region for more than a decade, said: "I spoke to somebody [recently] in Bangladesh who told me there are still communities cut off...People without food, without access to fresh water."

Noting that the monsoon rains are becoming more intense and devastating, he said:

"This is for two reasons. One, as temperatures increase, and we are seeing warming across the globe, the glaciers and the snowmelt are swelling rivers as they come through the Himalayas, through Nepal, India and into Bangladesh, where they go into the sea.

"At the same time, warming temperatures in the sea means that there's more moisture in the atmosphere, which means more intense and heavier rains.

"Climate scientists have been telling us and have predicted what would be happening. That these kinds of intense storms, which used to happen every few hundred years, would happen much more regularly...and now have become literally an annual thing.

"A problem is the ability of the people and the government to respond. When you have these floods, which wipe away infrastructure, schools, hospitals, roads, it is very hard to rebuild...

"The ability of these poor countries to be able to continuously rebuild is severely limited...Many of

these people are subsistence farmers, people who rely on their crops to both feed their families and to sell some of their crops to be able to survive the year—most of them have lost their crops already."

Rehman pointed out: "The Ganges Basin is one of the bread baskets, the food baskets of the region. This and the Indus food basket have been severely impacted by climate [change] and are predicted to get even worse."

The floods came weeks after MIT researchers released a report saying that soaring temperatures could make parts of South Asia, with 1.5 billion people, too hot for human survival by 2100. In a heat wave in 2015, some 3500 people died in India and Pakistan. That heat wave reached 121.1 degrees Fahrenheit. Rehman noted: "Earlier this year in May, Pakistan recorded a temperature level of 123.8 degrees Fahrenheit."

Global warming brings not only more intense rains and more violent storms, but also more intense heat and droughts, in different areas and sometimes in different seasons in the same area.

Global and local

It is often said that hurricanes are local phenomena, and we cannot say global warming is responsible for any one. But let's take a closer look at the local and global.

Fossil fuels produce the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming. The effect of these gases is global. The hurricane that hit Houston was a local phenomenon greatly strengthened by global warming.

The production and burning of fossil fuels are likewise local, taking place at specific locations. One of those locations is Houston. The irony is that Houston contributes to warming on a global scale, which in turn produced the extent of the local destruction of Houston.

Houston is home to a quarter of petroleum refining capacity in the U.S. The entire Gulf Coast hosts half the country's refining capacity.

Some of the major refineries in the region are run by ExxonMobil, Valero and the Saudi-owned Motiva. These have the higher capacity needed to refine the especially dirty tar sands oil piped in from Canada, as well as dirty crude from North Dakota via the Dakota Access Pipeline that First Nations peoples protested at Standing Rock.

The refineries in Houston were forced to shut down rapidly with Harvey's approach. As a former refinery worker, I know shutdowns and startups of refineries cause the extra release of toxic chemicals—rapid shutdowns even more so.

Houston is also home to petrochemical plants using products from the refineries. They had no infrastructure or plans to deal with disasters.

Flooding wrecked cooling equipment in these plants, causing many to explode and catch fire, releasing more toxins. These companies have refused to make public what poisons they produce, claiming such information could be used by terrorists to bomb these plants. It turns out the terrorists were the companies themselves.

The Center for Biological Diversity reported flooded oil refineries and chemical plants released as much as 2.25 million kilograms of pollutants into the air during the storm.

All Houston residents were exposed, but Black and Latino communities were hardest hit. Throughout the U.S., those living closest to toxic industries are most often minorities.

Environmental racism

Dr. Robert Bullard, known as the "father of environmental justice" said:

"When we talk about the impact of sea level rise and the impacts of climate change, you're talking about

a disproportionate impact on communities of color, on poor people who don't have health insurance, access to grocery stores...

"Even before Harvey, this storm and flood, people of color bore a disproportionate burden of having to live next to, surrounded by, these very dangerous chemicals... We have a name for it. We call that environmental injustice and environmental racism."

Just before Harvey hit, Trump revoked a Barack Obama-era standard that required federal infrastructure projects to factor in the effects of climate change like flooding. This means federal projects for infrastructure rebuilding in Houston can freely disregard planning for future storms.

Trump's proposed budget slashed, by 50 percent, funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is responsible for federal aid for the victims of Harvey.

Anti-immigrant measures

When Harvey hit, undocumented migrants were fearful of seeking rescue or going to shelters because of the possibility of being deported. Trump's unleashing of raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents has terrorized Latino communities and especially the undocumented.

Many Latino families have undocumented members, so whole families were frightened.

Compounding the problem for immigrants, during the flooding a new Texas state law was scheduled to go into effect that outlawed "sanctuary cities" like Houston—whose city government has ruled that its police will not aid ICE in rounding up and deporting immigrants without papers.

The law was scheduled to go into effect on September 1, but a federal judge temporarily blocked important provisions of the law a few days before, pending rulings on several lawsuits filed against it.

However, the judge left intact the law's "show me your papers" provision. This allows law enforcement officials to ask about immigration status during routine detentions for anything from speeding to jaywalking—in other words, racial profiling.

Now Trump has rescinded the DACA program Obama created in 2012. DACA gave undocumented immigrants brought into the U.S. as children by their parents a temporary reprieve from deportation. It also granted them work permits.

This move affects about 800,000 people, who are now on tenterhooks

about their status. Of these, 85,000 live in Houston, giving them and their families another reason to be fearful.

As was the case in Houston after hurricane Harvey flooded the streets and undocumented immigrants, fearing to be rounded up by the Immigration Enforcement Agency (ICE), avoided the government shelters that were set up, most of the 20,000 undocumented immigrants who fled the fires in the wine country have done likewise. Many of these immigrants labor in the vineyards.

A large number fled to the beaches on the Pacific Ocean, where they set up camps or slept in their cars. Others have gone to shelters set up by churches or others, to avoid federal agents.

On October 18, Thomas Homan, the acting director of ICE, blamed the sheriff of Sonoma County and the county government, another hard hit area, for allowing immigrants in. Homan accused the county of being a "non-cooperative jurisdiction"—that is non-cooperative with ICE raids—that "has left their community vulnerable to dangerous individuals and preventable crimes."

The sheriff fired back, calling ICE's statements inaccurate, inflammatory and damaging, and said, "ICE attacked the Sheriff's Office in the midst of the largest natural disaster this county every experienced—I hope to end this senseless public confrontation with these facts so that I may focus on the fire recovery."

The ICE acting director picked up on a charge by Steve Bannon's white nationalist *Breitbart* news that an undocumented immigrant has set the fires. The sheriff refuted that charge, too.

—*Green Left Weekly*, September 8, 2017

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/hurricanes-global-warming-environmental-racism-and-anti-immigrant-laws>



Corporate Assault on Science

By MURRAY DOBBIN

Corporate Ties That Bind: An Examination of Corporate Manipulation and Vested Interest in Public Health

By Martin J. Walker

The fact that science is the foundation for civilization and democracy should be self-evident. Regrettably that connection seems often to escape our collective consciousness. We tend to think of science narrowly as restricted to hi-tech, laboratories and the development of electric cars or travel to Mars. But everything we do collectively from Medicare to fighting climate change to designing social programs, building infrastructure and tax policy we take for granted is rooted in evidence, that is, science.

The advent of right-wing populist hostility towards evidence and now extended by so-called alternate facts, threatens to take us down the dystopian road of the irrational. The spread of this trend in the U.S.—highlighted by the election of Trump as president and the inability of U.S. culture to cope with gun violence—is as much a threat to the future of the human race as is climate change.

The trend started in earnest in the 1990s and it took a long time for scientists themselves to step up and defend their ground. An unprecedented and overt attack on public science by Stephen Harper forced the traditionally a-political science community to take a public stand for evidence-based policy. In the summer of 2012 hundreds of demonstrators marched from an Ottawa science conference to Parliament Hill under the banner the “Death of Evidence.” Many were working scientists wearing their lab coats. Last April there was the world-

wide Global March for Science in 600 cities coinciding with Earth Day.

The fightback for science and by scientists is one of the bright spots in the resistance against the rise of irrationalism. But there is another dark corner that has not had as much light shone on it and that is the pernicious corruption of science and scientists.

A recent book gives us a major resource for understanding and exposing the sinister trade in lies and obfuscation that results in hundreds-of-thousands, if not millions, of deaths every year. *Corporate Ties that Bind: An Examination of Corporate Manipulation and Vested Interests in Public Health* is a 450 page, 24 chapter compendium by an international group of scientists about how corporations routinely set out to undermine public interest science—and how they have found hundreds of scientists eager to do their bidding.

Those who consider themselves informed citizens know of course that science is often corrupted with the tobacco industry being the poster child for deadly science fraud. But even the most disillusioned will have their breath taken away by the accounts in this book. One of the most compelling chapters is authored by Canadian, Kathleen Ruff, (a friend) who led the successful fight against asbestos in Canada.

Ruff documents how the strategy of the tobacco industry was adopted by virtually every other dirty industry eager to hide their toxic products. The advice received by the industry from the infamous Hill and Knowlton was “...not to challenge scientific evidence but instead to seize and control it. ... declare the value of scientific skepticism...creating an appearance of scien-

tific controversy.” It was a brilliant strategy and is still being used today.

Perhaps the most chilling aspect of the book are the accounts of how world renowned scientists working in the public sector (and genuinely in the public interest) casually switched sides giving cover to some of the deadliest industries on the planet. Ruff highlights the example of Paolo Boffetta who for twenty years until 2009 worked for the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) where he eventually became chief of Environmental Cancer Epidemiology.

While still with IARC, Boffetta in 2008 accepted a contract with the consulting company Exponent, a firm dedicated to countering critical independent and government research into toxic products. He prepared a paper for the styrene industry claiming there was no increased risk of cancer “... among workers exposed to styrene.” The industry used the study effectively, citing Boffetta’s prestigious record with IARC. While Boffetta was at IARC in 1994 the agency had upgraded the styrene threat to “...probably carcinogenic to humans.”

When research by the Harvard School of Public Health revealed that sugary-drink consumption was responsible for roughly 180,000 deaths worldwide, Boffetta’s own mercenary research firm, the International Prevention Research Institute (IPRI), published a review article, funded by Coca-Cola claiming there was “no link” between sugary drinks and cancer.

Ruff writes that Boffetta, still touting his IARC credentials, continues to take on projects defending products

that have been judged to be carcinogenic or harmful by agencies like the WHO's IARC: "...whether it's the issue of dioxin, acrylimides, beryllium, atrazine, formaldehyde, diesel fumes, vinyl chloride, endocrine disruptors, PCBs, continued exposure to asbestos or air pollution caused by heavy metals, Boffetta has come up with the findings desired by the industry..."

The book focuses almost exclusively on the role of corporations in the assault on public interest science. It details the efforts of the pharmaceutical industry to cover up deadly drugs; false science supporting the asbestos industry and the tens-of-thousands of deaths that resulted; the failure of many scientific journals to demand of contributors that they reveal corporate funding and their refusal to withdraw articles revealed to be fraudulent; the systematic and sustained efforts to destroy the careers of scientists who have dared to simply tell the truth. It

has a chapter on "Epidemiological War Crimes" detailing how a mass of German data on the toxicity of many drugs and chemicals was quietly handed over to U.S. corporations after WW II, never to be seen again.

There is also a chapter on that now almost quaint concept of the precautionary principle, the foundation of public health protection for decades that was disposed of under the Paul Martin government by then Canadian deputy minister of health David Dodge. The precautionary principle, said Dodge was not geared to decision-making. "Risk management is about maximizing benefits and minimizing risks."

It is encouraging to see scientists becoming "political" because in a capitalist society science can't be anything but. Yet fighting the overtly irrational is just one step. Scientists have to show similar courage in confronting the corruption in their own ranks. They should all read this book.

Murray Dobbin has been a journalist, broadcaster, author and social activist for over forty years.

—CounterPunch, October 6, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/10/06/the-corporate-assault-on-science/>

The advice received by the industry from the infamous Hill and Knowlton was "...not to challenge scientific evidence but instead to seize and control it. ... declare the value of scientific skepticism...creating an appearance of scientific controversy."

Killing of History

By John Pilger

One of the most hyped "events" of American television, *The Vietnam War*, has started on the PBS network. The directors are Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. Acclaimed for his documentaries on the Civil War, the Great Depression and the history of jazz, Burns says of his Vietnam films, "They will inspire our country to begin to talk and think about the Vietnam War in an entirely new way."

In a society often bereft of historical memory and in thrall to the propaganda of its "exceptionalism," Burns' "entirely new" Vietnam War is presented as "epic, historic work." Its lavish advertising campaign promotes its biggest backer, Bank of America, which in 1971 was burned down by students in Santa Barbara, California, as a symbol of the hated war in Vietnam.

Burns says he is grateful to "the entire Bank of America family" which "has long supported our country's veterans." Bank of America was a corporate prop to an invasion that killed perhaps as many as four million Vietnamese and ravaged and poisoned a once bountiful land. More than 58,000 American soldiers were killed, and around the same number are estimated to have taken their own lives.

I watched the first episode in New York. It leaves you in no doubt of its intentions right from the start. The narrator says the war "was begun in good faith by decent people out of fateful misunderstandings, American overconfidence and Cold War misunderstandings."

The dishonesty of this statement is not surprising. The cynical fabrication

of "false flags" that led to the invasion of Vietnam is a matter of record—the Gulf of Tonkin "incident" in 1964, which Burns promotes as true, was just one. The lies litter a multitude of official documents, notably the *Pentagon Papers*, which the great whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg released in 1971.

There was no good faith. The faith was rotten and cancerous. For me—as it must be for many Americans—it is difficult to watch the film's jumble of "red peril" maps, unexplained interviewees, ineptly cut archive and maudlin American battlefield sequences.

In the series' press release in Britain—the BBC will show it—there is no mention of Vietnamese dead, only Americans. "We are all searching for some meaning in this terrible trag-

edy,” Novick is quoted as saying. How very post-modern.

All this will be familiar to those who have observed how the American media and popular culture behemoth has revised and served up the great crime of the second half of the twentieth century: from *The Green Berets* and *The Deer Hunter* to *Rambo* and, in so doing, has legitimized subsequent wars of aggression. The revisionism never stops and the blood never dries. The invader is pitied and purged of guilt, while “searching for some meaning in this terrible tragedy.” Cue Bob Dylan: “Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?”

I thought about the “decency” and “good faith” when recalling my own first experiences as a young reporter in Vietnam: watching hypnotically as the skin fell off Napalmed peasant children like old parchment, and the ladders of bombs that left trees petrified and festooned with human flesh. General William Westmoreland, the American commander, referred to people as “termites.”

In the early 1970s, I went to Quang Ngai province, where in the village of My Lai, between 347 and 500 men, women and infants were murdered by American troops (Burns prefers “killings.”) At the time, this was presented as an aberration: an “American tragedy” (*Newsweek*.) In this one province, it was estimated that 50,000 people had been slaughtered during the era of American “free fire zones.” Mass homicide. This was not news.

To the north, in Quang Tri province, more bombs were dropped than in all of Germany during the Second World War. Since 1975, unexploded ordnance has caused more than 40,000 deaths in mostly “South Vietnam,” the country America claimed to “save” and, with France, conceived as a singularly imperial ruse.

The “meaning” of the Vietnam War is no different from the meaning of the genocidal campaign against the Native Americans, the colonial massacres in

the Philippines, the atomic bombings of Japan, the leveling of every city in North Korea. The aim was described by Colonel Edward Lansdale, the famous CIA man on whom Graham Greene based his central character in *The Quiet American*.

Quoting Robert Taber’s *The War of the Flea*, Lansdale said, “There is only one means of defeating an insurgent people who will not surrender, and that is extermination. There is only one way to control a territory that harbors resistance, and that is to turn it into a desert.”

Nothing has changed. When Donald Trump addressed the United Nations on September 19—a body established to spare humanity the “scourge of war”—he declared he was “ready, willing and able” to “totally destroy” North Korea and its 25 million people. His audience gasped, but Trump’s language was not unusual.

To the north, in Quang Tri province, more bombs were dropped than in all of Germany during the Second World War.

His rival for the presidency, Hillary Clinton, had boasted she was prepared to “totally obliterate” Iran, a nation of more than 80 million people. This is the American Way; only the euphemisms are missing now.

Returning to the U.S., I am struck by the silence and the absence of an opposition—on the streets, in journalism and the arts, as if dissent once tolerated in the “mainstream” has regressed to a dissidence: a metaphoric underground.

There is plenty of sound and fury at Trump the odious one, the “fascist,” but almost none at Trump the symptom and caricature of an enduring system of conquest and extremism.

Where are the ghosts of the great anti-war demonstrations that took over Washington in the 1970s? Where is the equivalent of the Freeze Movement that filled the streets of Manhattan in the 1980s, demanding that President Reagan withdraw battlefield nuclear weapons from Europe?

The sheer energy and moral persistence of these great movements largely succeeded; by 1987 Reagan had negotiated with Mikhail Gorbachev an Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) that effectively ended the Cold War.

Today, according to secret NATO documents obtained by the German newspaper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, this vital treaty is likely to be abandoned as “nuclear targeting planning is increased.” The German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has warned against “repeating the worst mistakes of the Cold War ... All the good treaties on disarmament and arms control from Gorbachev and Reagan are in acute peril. Europe is threatened again with becoming a military training ground for nuclear weapons. We must raise our voice against this.”

But not in America. The thousands who turned out for Senator Bernie Sanders’ “revolution” in last year’s presidential campaign are collectively mute on these dangers. That most of America’s violence across the world has been perpetrated not by Republicans, or mutants like Trump, but by liberal Democrats, remains a taboo.

Barack Obama provided the apotheosis, with seven simultaneous wars, a presidential record, including the destruction of Libya as a modern state. Obama’s overthrow of Ukraine’s elected government has had the desired effect: the massing of American-led NATO forces on Russia’s western borderland through which the Nazis invaded in 1941.

Obama’s “pivot to Asia” in 2011 signalled the transfer of the majority of

America's naval and air forces to Asia and the Pacific for no purpose other than to confront and provoke China. The Nobel Peace Laureate's worldwide campaign of assassinations is arguably the most extensive campaign of terrorism since 9/11.

What is known in the U.S. as "the left" has effectively allied with the darkest recesses of institutional power, notably the Pentagon and the CIA, to see off a peace deal between Trump and Vladimir Putin and to reinstate Russia as an enemy, on the basis of no evidence of its alleged interference in the 2016 presidential election.

The true scandal is the insidious assumption of power by sinister war-making vested interests for which no American voted. The rapid ascendancy of the Pentagon and the surveillance agencies under Obama represented an historic shift of power in Washington. Daniel

Ellsberg rightly called it a *coup*. The three generals running Trump are its witness.

All of this fails to penetrate those "liberal brains pickled in the formaldehyde of identity politics," as Luciana Bohne noted memorably. Commodified and market-tested, "diversity" is the new liberal brand, not the class people serve regardless of their gender and skin color: not the responsibility of all to stop a barbaric war to end all wars.

"How did it fucking come to this?" says Michael Moore in his Broadway show, *Terms of My Surrender*, a vaudeville for the disaffected set against a backdrop of Trump as Big Brother.

I admired Moore's film, *Roger & Me*, about the economic and social devastation of his hometown of Flint, Michigan, and Sicko, his investigation into the corruption of healthcare in America.

The night I saw his show, his happy-clappy audience cheered his reassur-

ance that "we are the majority!" and calls to "impeach Trump, a liar and a fascist!" His message seemed to be that had you held your nose and voted for Hillary Clinton, life would be predictable again.

He may be right. Instead of merely abusing the world, as Trump does, the Great Obliterator might have attacked Iran and lobbed missiles at Putin, whom she likened to Hitler: a particular profanity given the 27 million Russians who died in Hitler's invasion.

"Listen up," said Moore, "putting aside what our governments do, Americans are really loved by the world!"

There was a silence.

—*CounterPunch*, September 22, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/09/22/the-killing-of-history/>

Eve of Destruction...Or Revolution?

BY RON JACOBS

Creating an Ecological Society: Toward a Revolutionary Transformation

By Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams

"In order to replace capitalism with an ecological society we need a revolution." That modest sentence is how Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams, the authors of *Creating an Ecological Society: Toward a Revolutionary Transformation*, begin the last chapter of their new book. Although the chapter is the end of the book, it is also an opening to a new direction, a new movement. It is also the essence of the entire text. Capitalism is the reason our biosphere is collapsing and the only way humanity and the rest of Earth's species can survive is by ending capitalism. Given that capitalism and those who profit most from it have proven time and time again that not only are they unwilling to give up the rapacious

economy that is destroying earth, but that they even refuse to admit that it is that system which is the cause, the only solution is revolution.

**...the ever-intensifying
pursuit of profit that
capitalism needs to
survive is a death knell
for the planet...**

This text is written by two environmental activists (and teachers) with credentials that more than back up the science they explain in this book. Indeed, it is their understanding of the science involved when discussing the ecological crisis we face that has helped

inform their Marxist politics. Both Magdoff, author most recently of *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism* (with John Bellamy Foster) and a Plant and Soil scientist who taught for decades at the University of Vermont, and Williams, who teaches secondary school and wrote *Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis*, patiently present empirical and anecdotal evidence to shore up their argument that the ever-intensifying pursuit of profit that capitalism needs to survive is a death knell for the planet. That is, unless there is radical change that ends that pursuit.

But what about human nature? Aren't we wired to compete and control? Don't we want to have a lot of material goods? Just as they take on other questions that would seem to prevent the revolution so urgently

needed, the authors answer these questions about human nature with data and patience. In essence, they convincingly argue that empathy and cooperation are not only other aspects of human nature, but are historically greater than the desire to compete and dominate. Specifically, Magdoff and Williams argue, it is the human tendency to cooperate which has helped humanity to survive over the millennia; this is clear in how tasks were divided before capitalism came into being and in how even today, humans work together in times of disaster. Continuing this explanation, it is pointed out that capitalism encourages competition, consumption and individualism because that is what makes capitalism thrive. In turn, this is why those aspects of human nature seem to be the only ones.

In essence, they convincingly argue that empathy and cooperation are not only other aspects of human nature, but are historically greater than the desire to compete and dominate.

Each chapter of the text opens with a quote. Many of those quotes are from Friedrich Engels and emphasize the fact that humanity is not above nor separate from nature but a part of it. Once one accepts this consciousness, argue Magdoff and Williams, the idea that what happens to the plants and animals in our world matters as much as what happens to humans becomes considerably easier. If we accept this consciousness, then the need for a society that sustains that life—an ecological society—becomes not just apparent, but necessary.

As I write this, F-16 fighter jets from a local Air National Guard base are flying over my residence, practicing bombing runs like they do so many days here in northern Vermont. The ungodly noise they make is but the least of their

**the U.S. military
is not only the world's
biggest consumer of
fossil fuels, it is also one
of the world's largest
polluters...**

faults. Being built for nothing but war, these planes represent in more ways than one can count exactly what the authors of *Creating an Ecological Society* are writing about—a dependence on fossil fuels sold for profit and controlled by war and the threat of war. Each plane costs millions of dollars and runs on very expensive fossil fuel extracts. Besides the pollutants these training runs leave in the air above my house, the death and environmental destruction they wreak upon those in countries the flight crews are sent to attack is immeasurable and not easily reversible. As Magdoff and Williams point out numerous times in their text, the U.S. military is not only the world's biggest consumer of fossil fuels, it is also one of the world's largest polluters. I mention this to emphasize the point that any true environmental movement must by necessity also be an antiwar and anti-imperialist movement. *Creating an Ecological Society* also makes it clear that this movement must by nature be anti-racist and anti-sexist. After all, it is often women and people of color who are among the most affected by the environmental damage of capitalism.

This book is a serious examination of the ever more serious problem humanity is facing while it destroys the biosphere. It is also a convincing argument for a

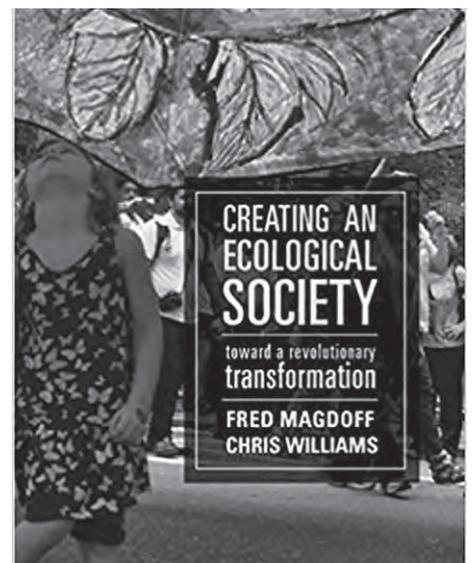
socialist solution to that problem. While providing a detailed and understandable analysis of the science that proves the ecological crisis we find ourselves in, *Creating an Ecological Society* also breaks down the essentially suicidal nature of the political economy of capitalism. The authors make it clear that the time for apathy is over, as is the pretense that the cure for capitalism's deadly excesses can be found in capitalism itself. While reforms undertaken with the understanding that they are a potential beginning of a livable world and not the

**...any true environmental
movement must by
necessity also be an
antiwar and anti-
imperialist movement...**

solution can help us continue, the message inside these covers is that humanity cannot survive if it allows those whose existence is determined by pursuing profit to determine our future—if we want that future to be a livable one for all species, including homo sapiens.

—CounterPunch, August 8, 2017

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/08/08/eve-of-destruction-or-revolution/>



LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Dear Editors,

Shinzo Abe, the historical denialist in chief, is now cornered in the international arena. We in Japan thank your struggles in the belly of the biggest beast. The unveiling of the “Comfort Women” memorial at St. Mary’s Square in San Francisco, is the great achievement of *halmonis*—victims of the Japanese military CW system—and the Comfort Women Justice Coalition (CWJC) and other activists in the U.S. at large.

Halmoni Kim Hak-sun first spoke out as the CW victim in 1991 about her experiences under the abominable system set up by the Japanese military forces.

“Why in 1991, after decades of silence?” is the question most favored by Japanese denialists who pretend to believe that they can undermine trustworthiness of CW testimonies, which, however, reveals their own serious crisis.

She overcame unimaginable difficulties and rose up, encouraged by Korean workers’ great victory and driven by her sense of danger about Japanese re-militarization and repeat of its war crimes.

In South Korea, the Great Workers’ Struggle in 1987 changed the power relationship in the whole society, winning a historical victory over the military dictatorship, which largely consisted of ex-collaborators with Japanese colonial rule. The Japanese ruling class lost its strategic leverage.

On top of it, *halmonis*’ actions seriously upset Yasuhiro Nakasone’s scheme of “Final Settlement of Post-WWII Politics.” During the 1980s, the then Prime Minister Nakasone openly declared class war. “I promoted privatization of Japan National Railways with the clear intention to make a glorious Constitution anew, because JNR privatization would destroy the National Railway Workers Union, then Sohyo (the then largest national trade union center) and the Socialist Party, which would enable us to make a glorious Constitution anew” he said in an interview by *NHK*, the national TV.¹

The year 1991 marked the historical turning point of the post-WWII political landscape in Japan. The first time since the Japanese defeat in 1945, the government sent its troops abroad, deploying mine sweepers to the Persian Gulf. Such a big change became possi-

ble through the busting of railway unions and the destruction of Sohyo and the SP, the largest and somewhat “left wing” opposition party.

Among railway unions, only Doro-Chiba (National Railway Motive Power Union of Chiba) struck against the JNR privatization. The management fired 40 of its leaders and members in retaliation. It struck again after the privatization, which prevented the open betrayal of the leadership of the NRU and helped its rank and file continue the struggle for reinstatement of fired members.

In these circumstances, the right-turn of Japanese politics suffered a severe blow from *halmonis*.

War crimes are not just problems of past history but a burning issue in the current class war.

Halmonis’ demands for their dignity and condemnation of Japanese war crimes were, and still are, a wake-up call for the Japanese working class and people to rise up again to stop the destruction of the hard won Constitution including Article 9—the renunciation of war and military forces, and a new war—thus a decisive blow for Japanese imperialists.

Now, from the beginning of 2017, the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been grilled about the Moritomo Gakuen and Kake Gakuen scandals, both involving ultra-nationalist private education and huge tax money corruption.

In September, he abruptly decided to dissolve the Lower House and launch an election campaign.

The Governor of Tokyo, Yuriko Koike, established a new party, “Party of Hope.” Seiji Maehara, President of the Democratic Party, decided to make his party members run under Koike’s ticket. The largest opposition party with over a hundred MPs was thus dismantled overnight. Such a thing can



happen only in wartime or under looming war.

Rikio Koizu, the president of the largest national trade union center in Japan, Rengo, was the co-conspirator of this scheme; Rengo is now in turmoil.

Abe and Koike are not ordinary conservatives. They are both leading members of Nippon Kaigi (Japan Conference) a Fascist or quasi-Fascist organization, which promotes historical denialism, xenophobia, nuclear armament of Japan, destruction of labor rights and the Constitution among other things.

The new president of South Korea, Moon Jae-in, introduced the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system under the pretext of “defense from the missiles from North Korea.” The THAAD is, however, completely useless for supposed missile attacks from the North which do not fly high altitude, even if we accept at face value the MIC’s claim that THAAD’s interceptor missiles can “hit” adversary missiles. The THAAD has not just interceptor missiles but also a sophisticated radar system. Deployment of the THAAD in South Korea is obviously a drastic escalation of surveillance of China and Russia into their huge landmass: a preparation of war against them.

Shortly before the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan—China’s neighbor—the Pentagon described its strategy against China (and Russia) in its Quadrennial Defense Review: “Adversaries will also likely seek to exploit strategic depth to their advantage. Mobile ballistic missile systems can be launched from an extended range, exacerbating the anti-access and area-denial challenges. Space denial capabilities, such as ground-based lasers, can be located deep within an adversary’s territory.” So, the DoD wanted “the development and acquisition of robust capabilities to conduct persistent surveillance, precision strikes, and maneuvers at varying depths within denied areas.”

At that time, in 2001, the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq were looming. Now, a war on Korean Peninsula is imminent. It will go nuclear.

In these circumstances, the CWJC and U.S. activists at large drove a wedge between Japanese imperialists and the S. Korean neo-liberal government.²

Moon Jae-in nominated a union busting corporate lawyer to be his secretary. As the chief secretary of the president Roh Moo-hyn, he helped dismantle labor rights and enter into the U.S.-S. Korea Free Trade Agreement, arresting many farmers and workers. He is our enemy. Nonetheless, he cannot openly collaborate with Japanese historical denialism, if he desires to survive as Korean president.

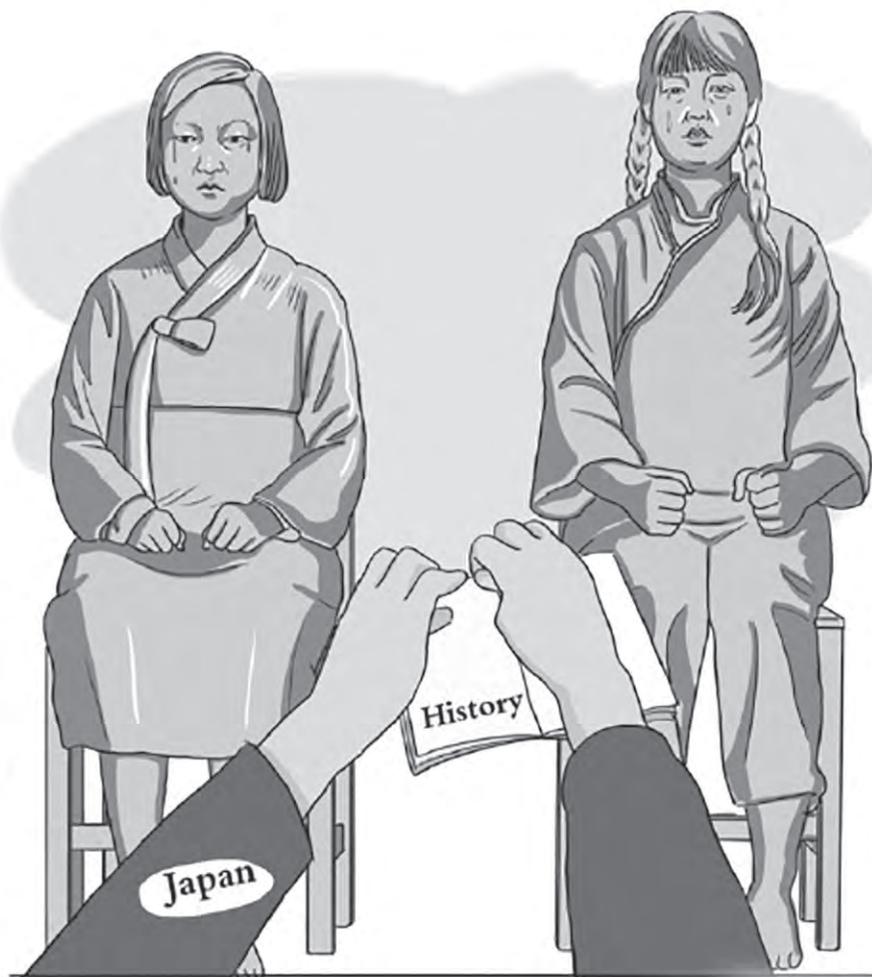
We workers around the world, especially workers in the U.S., Japan and Korea, have a huge potential to strengthen international bonds, launch a massive and militant struggle against war on the Korean Peninsula.

Celebrate together the Russian Revolution Centenary and the beginning of a new world revolution!

In Solidarity,
Seto

1 <http://www.doro-chiba.org/english/nakano/works/on-rail/ch04.html>

2 <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/09/26/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-expresses-concern-south-koreas-comfort-women-monument-plan/>



SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Where to find us:

www.socialistviewpoint.org

info@socialistviewpoint.org

(415) 824-8730

EDITORS

Carole Seligman, Bonnie Weinstein

GRAPHIC & WEB DESIGN

Mykael

BUSINESS MANAGER

Carole Seligman

The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association publishes *Socialist Viewpoint* in the interests of the working class.

The editors take positions consistent with revolutionary Marxism. Within this context the editors will consider for publication articles, reviews or comments. The editors may publish comments to accompany these articles. Photographs and cartoons will be appreciated.

Socialist Viewpoint reprints articles circulated on the Internet when we deem them of interest to our readers.

No limitation will be placed on the author(s) use of their material in their subsequent work provided acknowledgment is made of its publication in *Socialist Viewpoint*. The Socialist Viewpoint Publishing Association retains for itself rights to reprint articles as collections, educational bulletins, and similar uses. With the inclusion of an acknowledgment and a notice of the copyright ownership, permission is hereby given educators to duplicate essays for distribution gratis or for use in the classroom at cost. The author(s) retain all other rights.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Viewpoint*. These views are expressed in editorials.

Socialist Viewpoint is printed by members of Local 583, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, California.

Note to Readers:

Socialist Viewpoint magazine has been edited and distributed by revolutionaries who share a common political outlook stemming from the old Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon, and Socialist Action from 1984 through 1999.

After being expelled from Socialist Action in 1999, we formed Socialist Workers Organization in an attempt to carry on the project of building a nucleus of a revolutionary party true to the historic teachings and program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

What we have found is that our numbers are insufficient for this crucial project of party building. This problem is not ours alone; it is a problem flowing from the division and fragmentation that has plagued the revolutionary movement in capitalist America and the world since the 1980s.

What we intend to do is to continue to promote the idea of building a revolutionary Marxist working class political party through the pages of *Socialist Viewpoint* magazine. We continue to have an optimistic outlook about the revolutionary potential of the world working class to rule society in its own name—socialism. We are optimistic that the working class, united across borders, and acting in its own class interests can solve the devastating crises of war, poverty, oppression, and environmental destruction that capitalism is responsible for.

We expect that revolutionaries from many different organizations, traditions, and backgrounds will respond to the opportunities that will arise, as workers resist the attacks of the capitalist system and government, to build a new revolutionary political party. Just as we join with others to build every response to war and oppression, we look forward to joining with others in the most important work of building a new mass revolutionary socialist workers' party as it becomes possible to do so.

Special Introductory Subscription Offer!

One year of *Socialist Viewpoint* for \$20.00,

Bargain rate: \$35.00 for two years;

(Regular rate: \$30.00/International Rate: \$50.00)

Make your check payable to: *Socialist Viewpoint*, & mail to:

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

60 29th Street, #429

San Francisco, CA 94110

Please include your name, address, city and zip code.

To help us know who our subscribers are,
please tell us your occupation, union, school,
or organization.

Major Tillery: Still Fighting for Justice!

BY JUSTICE FOR MAJOR TILLERY

October 22—Major Tillery’s challenge to his 1985 conviction for a 1976 murder and assault was submitted for decision to a Pennsylvania Superior Court appeals panel on October 31. Tillery’s case is about actual innocence. It highlights Philadelphia’s infamous culture of police and prosecutorial misconduct. The only so-called evidence against him was from lying jailhouse informants who were threatened with false murder prosecutions, and plea and bail deals on pending cases. A favorite inducement for jailhouse informants in the early 1980s was “sex for lies.” Homicide detectives brought the informants and their girlfriends to police headquarters for private time in interview rooms for sex.

This is Major Tillery’s 34th year in prison on a sentence of life without parole. Over twenty of those years were spent in solitary confinement in some of the harshest federal and state “control units.”

This past year the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) acknowledged that Major Tillery has hepatitis C, which has progressed to cirrhosis of the liver. The DOC nonetheless refused to provide treatment, ignoring the federal court ruling in *Abu-Jamal v. Wetzel* that the DOC’s Hep-C protocols violate the constitutional requirement to provide prisoners adequate medical care. With the help of the Abolitionist Law Center, Major Tillery is now receiving the anti-viral treatment.

Tillery has been doubly punished in prison for his activism in support of fellow prisoners. His 1990 lawsuit, *Tillery v. Owens* resulted in federal court orders to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to provide medical and mental health treatment and end double-celling. He challenged the extreme conditions of solitary con-

finement in the New Jersey State prison in Trenton, *Tillery v. Hayman* (2007). His advocacy for Mumia Abu-Jamal in February 2015 helped save Mumia’s life. Major Tillery filed grievances for himself and other prisoners suffering from painful and debilitating skin rashes. For these acts of solitary with other prisoners, just months after he re-entered general population from a decade in solitary confinement, Tillery was set up with false prison misconduct charges and given four months back in “the hole.” Major Tillery filed a federal retaliation lawsuit against the DOC. Recently, Major succeeded in getting a program for elderly prisoners established at SCI Frackville.

For his appeals and continuing investigation, Major Tillery now has the *pro bono* representation of Philadelphia criminal defense attorney Stephen Patrizio:

“I took on Major Tillery’s defense, which exposes prosecutorial misconduct in convicting him of a nine-year old murder based solely on the testimony of jailhouse informants. This testimony was recanted in the informants’ sworn statements that detail the coercion and favors by homicide detectives and prosecutors to manufacture false trial testimony.

“Now the DA’s office wants to uphold the unconstitutional application of ‘timeliness’ restrictions applied to post-conviction petitions to dismiss Major Tillery’s petition, arguing he is too late in uncovering that the DA’s office knowingly put a lying witness on the stand.”

Major Tillery’s appeal is to win his “day in court” on his petition based on his innocence and misconduct by the police and prosecution. At the same time, the investigation continues to further uncover the evidence of this misconduct.

Although Major Tillery has *pro bono* legal representation there are still substantial costs to appeal and to conduct additional investigation. Please help with a donation.

How you can help

Financial Support—Major Tillery needs funds for a lawyer in his appeal to overturn his conviction.

Go to *PayPal*

Go to *JPay.com*;

code: Major Tillery AM9786 PADO

Or send a check/money order to: Major Tillery or Kamilah Iddeen, U.S. Post Office,

2347 N. 7th St.,
P.O. Box 13205
Harrisburg, PA 17110-6501

Have a fund-raising event!

Thanks to Dr. Suzanne Ross, International Spokesperson for the International Concerned Family and Friends for Mumia Abu-Jamal for \$1000 gifted during her 80th Birthday celebration.

Tell Philadelphia District Attorney:

Free Major Tillery! He is an innocent man, framed by police and prosecution.

Call: 215-686-8711 or, Email: DA_Central@phila.gov

Write to:

Major Tillery AM 9786
SCI Frackville, 1111 Altamont Blvd.
Frackville, PA 17931

For More Information, To read the new appeal, Go To: [JusticeForMajorTillery](http://JusticeForMajorTillery.org)

Kamilah Iddeen (717) 379-9009,
Kamilah29@yahoo.com

Rachel Wolkenstein (917) 689-4009,
RachelWolkenstein@gmail.com

www.JusticeForMajorTillery.org



Some of the 400,000 Rohingya refugees fleeing genocide in Burma. Read *When is Genocide Genocide?* on page 50.

On the Front Cover: Northern California Fires wipe out over 5,000 homes, while Puerto Rico Floods due to hurricane Maria. Read *California Burning, Puerto Rico Drowning* on page 4.



African-American school teacher, DeAndre Harris, victim of beating by neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia, charged with assaulting white supremacists who beat him. Read *Turning the Victim Into the Criminal* on page 11.



Demonstration in protest of new nuclear weapons. Read *Trillions for New Nuclear Weapons* on page 7.

★ ★ ★ **Attention Prison Mail Room:** ★ ★ ★

Prisoners retain their free speech rights under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. That means you cannot legally suppress the expression and consideration of ideas. Prison walls do not form a barrier separating prisoners from the protection of the Constitution, according to the *Turner v. Safely* ruling, [482 U.S. 78, 107 Sct 2245 (1987)] If you exclude printed matter on an improper basis, or give a false pretext or rationale for its exclusion, because of the ideas expressed in it, you are breaking the law. The prisoner denied access to material he wants to read can bring a civil rights lawsuit against you with cause for seeking punitive damages. In the case of *Police Department Chicago v. Mosley*, 408 U.S. 92, 95, 92 Sct 2286, 2290 (1972) the court found that “[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, subject matter or content.”